WORLD / A20

Aging work force: US short of skilled workers

BUSINESS / B6

Fear of recession in US drives Asian stocks down

METRO / A17

De Castro orders MWSS to take over water distribution at BF Homes Parañaque

Winners of the Inquirer's 'We're Sharing the Number 1 Feeling' promo will be announced tomorrow, Jan. 23.

Pangasinan town honors eggplant

By Yolanda Garcia-Puertas
Inquirer N. Luzon

VILLASIS, PANGASINAN—Known as the eggplant (*talong*), an agricultural fixture in western Pangasinan is

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, January 22, 2008 | 44 | 7 sections | Vol. 21 / No. 44 | P18 | www.inquirer.net

4 lucky bettors hit P133-M lotto jackpot

By Jayanness L. Rodrigo

THE CEBU TRIO'S FOUR WINNING MULTImillionaires—three from Lucon and one from Mindanao—matches the luckiest birthdays and anniversaries.

Instead of relying on the "lucky pick" method used by bettors who have won out

Media seek SC protection

Petition urges stop to arrests of reporters

By Margaux C. Ortiz

ELEVEN MEMBERS OF the ABS-CBN news staff yesterday filed a petition urging the Supreme Court to stop police from harassing or threatening to arrest media people while reporting on coups and other emergencies.

Led by senior correspondent Ces Drilon, the petitioners asked the high tribunal to declare their arrest on Nov. 30 during the Manila Peninsula standoff illegal and to issue a writ of amparo against police and officials of the former administration.

"Silence in this press freedom and censorship are no longer just a temptation for government," Drilon said in a news conference later. "It is a reality that we have to expose and check."

The writ, copied from a measure used widely in Latin America against abusive security agents, was adopted by the high tribunal last year amid an upsurge of human rights abuses and extrajudicial executions in

MEDIA / A12

Erap: God is punishing the country

By Jocelyn R. Uy and Beverly T. Mendrial

CLAIMING VINDICATION, Joseph Estrada yesterday said the country was now suffering because the late Jaime Cardinal Sin did not heed "God's voice" for him to backed the Edsa II people power revolt, despite a famous order to stay away.

ERAP, MORE / A6

SWEET VICTORY. Jennifer Rosales (left) and Dorothy Delasin savor the moment they won for the Philippines the women's golf World Cup in South Africa's Sun City resort on Sunday.

Perfect teamwork lifts RP pair to World Cup glory

SUN CITY, SOUTH AFRICA—JENNIFER Rosales and Dorothy Delasin shot a four-ball 7-under par 65 on Sunday as the Philippines won the fourth edition of the Women's World Cup of Golf by two strokes over South Korea.

Shin Ji-yai and Ji Eun-hee were comfortably in the lead after nine holes, but Rosales birdied the 11th and 12th holes and Delasin closed out with four consecutive birdies as the Filipinos finished at 13-under 199 at the Gary Player Country Club.

The Koreans finished second at 16-under 200 after a final round 67. Taiwan (601) and Japan (604) completed a big day for Asians as they shared third place at 11-under 201.

Rosales and Delasin split the first prize purse of $240,000 from the total purse of $1.4 million with the Koreans picking up $168,000. Sixth-ranked entered the final round tied at 11-under with the Filipinos earlier shooting a 68.

and the Koreans carding a 68. 71. (For final standings and prize money in Sports, Page A20.)

"Thanks to all you fans out there and thanks to Dorothy for the wonderful golf she played," said a tearful Rosales.

"This win was all about the team

ROSALES / A2

OFWs taught how to counter strong peso

By Dara C. Bundan

HONG KONG—IT WAS A SUB-due offloading the dole, of learning about options on "hedging" and of starting livelihood projects as the strengthening peso continued to grow in the earnings of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

Eager to find ways to protect their hard-earned money, some 2,000 mostly blue-collar Filipinos workers escaped to a Philippines Bank of the Philippines Department of Labor and Employment road show at the Central Hall here.

They came after attending a "Sending Home" offering by visiting Fr. Bernardo Bearn at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Caine Road.

Vice President Noli de Castro, who flew in to grace the government-led OFW road show, encouraged attendees to study the various financial instruments offered by DBP to protect the peso equivalent of their remittances and start small business.

Of the OFWs in attendance, 1,200 submitted to DBP applications for loans under the Negosyo program, a tie-up with

OFWs / A13

Burgos mom tells court AFP behind son's kidnap

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE MOTHER OF MISSING ACtivist Jonas Burgos told the Court of Appeals yesterday that soldiers pointed to the military as the kidnappers of her son and pleaded that if he had been murdered it should at least help find his body.

Appearing for the first time at a hearing on her plea for the issuance of a writ of amparo, Edita Burgos, 64, said that the 8 armed men said by her son's kidnappers were taken from a vehicle in the army's custody.

She dismissed military claims that the plates had been stolen.

"So when she should I point," she said. "If he has been murdered, so be it, then let's find the body."

Assistant Solicitor General Jacques Tang, representing the Armed Forces, told the seven-man Burgos" murder had

BURGOS / A8

Lim says Marines, not police, fired at protesters

By Alison W. Lopez

HE SAID THEM TO SHOOTING, but they didn't know.

Recalling the 1987 massacre on Mendiola Bridge, Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim yesterday pointed to the rifle-toting Philippine Marines—and not the police—guarding the historic bridge as the ones who fired at the protesting farmers, killing 13 and wounding more than 80 others.

Lim, then chief of the Western Police District (WPD), had received his share of the blame for the carnage near Malacañang and was among those sued by the victims' families.

LIM SAYS MARINES / A6

MENDIOLA MASSACRE. A wounded protester (above) gets assistance from a counterpart who looks back in defiance at the police and military (right) in this photo taken at Mendiola on Jan. 22, 1987.

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Isolated rain showers and thunderstorms in the afternoon or evening over Metro Manila and nearby provinces. Light to moderate winds from the southwest. Seas slight to moderate.

Baguio	Partly cloudy with rain showers	Iloilo	Mostly cloudy with rain showers
Tuguegarao	Mostly cloudy with rain showers	Cebu	Mostly cloudy with rain showers
Legaspi	Partly cloudy with rain showers	Surigao	Mostly cloudy with rain showers
Metro Manila	Mostly cloudy with rain showers	Cagayan de Oro	Mostly cloudy with rain showers
Tacloban	Mostly cloudy with rain showers	Davao	Mostly cloudy with rain showers
Catarman	Mostly cloudy with rain showers	Zamboanga	Mostly cloudy with rain showers

Second
FRONTPAGE

2/2 FOUR DIGIT
14 25 3 8 2 9
(announced anytime)
Weekly SUBSTRIPES 4-in-play
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MEGALOTTO 6/45
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JDV on 'rift': Everything's OK

Absence from Palace due to agenda-setting meet for Lakas, he says

By Norman Bordadora and Gabriel Cardinoza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

SAYING "EVERYTHING IS OKAY," SPEAKER Jose de Venecia yesterday explained his absence from the President's traditional tea afternoon last week which had sparked all kinds of speculation about a rift in the ruling party.

His excuse: "I was finalizing the agenda of the Lakas national executive meeting."

De Venecia said he presented the talking points to President Macapagal-Arroyo when they met for lunch at the residence of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita after the state festivities.

"We had a three-hour luncheon meeting at the house of Executive Secretary Ermita with [Trade Secretary Peter] Favila. We had a very constructive session, a very positive meeting," the Speaker elaborated during another interview aired over Dagupan's Bayan Radyo.

"Everything is okay, we have a strong united front," he said.

On the news that the President's son had filed for a leave of absence from Lakas-CMD, De Venecia said, "We don't see it as a problem."

He did not respond on the reason the President's son went on leave, saying Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo had said his reasons were "purely personal."

"He let it quite clear to me and my wife Gina. We love him," De Venecia told the reporters.

De Venecia added that he and Mrs Arroyo didn't even discuss Mikey's leave from the party at the luncheon.

Reacting to speculation that the young Arroyo's leave was an emotional one for his continued leadership of Lakas, De Venecia in the radio interview said he did not think it would "cause an exodus of party members."

"Anggapay oman (There's no such sentiment)," he told listeners in his native Pangalatok, and challenged anyone in the House to produce at least 115 votes to oust him from the Speaker's post.

"They should not... unnecessarily speculate on the reasons behind his leave," he added.

But speculations of the Arroyo-De Venecia estrangement does not look like it is about to end.

The Speaker was again conspicuously absent when Mrs Arroyo arrived in Dagupan City on Sunday to stand as sponsor at the wedding of a relative at the St. John the Evangelist Cathedral. Even city officials were absent.

It turned out De Venecia was not invited or even informed of the President's visit to his turf.

"Well, how can I be around? I had to stand as sponsor at the wedding of [Dagupan City Councilor] Michael Fernandez," De Venecia said in the radio interview.

Fernandez, national president of the Philippine Councilors' League and nephew of Dagupan Mayor Alipio Fernandez Jr., married movie and television actress Shaylee-Rose de la Cruz in a church wedding in Bicutan, Manila. "Mayor Al [Fernandez]'s son also chose as the wedding, [Vice Mayor] Belen Fernandez was in China," De Venecia said.

"Imam ag oni anma ya anla dia a Presidente Arroyo. As anma oni kanyan (Besides, we did not know that President Arroyo was coming here. Had we known), no would have made adjustments," he said.

On the phone, De Venecia said, "The President and I together with former President Fidel Ramos have a united front."

"There is no such divisiveness (in the country) ... and it's very noticeable. We have to work together," he added.

De Venecia described his meeting with Mr Arroyo over lunch on Friday as "good and productive."

Aside from discussing plans for the national directorate meeting and the party's 15th anniversary, De Venecia said he and the President also discussed his recent trip to China where he met with top-level Chinese officials.

The much-talked about rift between the two leaders got going after the Speaker's son, Jose "Joey" de Venecia III, implicated the President's husband in the bribery-tainted National Broadband Network deal with the Chinese firm ZTE.

The young De Venecia told a Senate inquiry that Jose Miguel Arroyo, during a meeting at Wack Wack golf club, had ordered him to "back off." The ₱329-million deal, Mr. Arroyo denied this happened.

WHAT'S INSIDE

POLICE FORCE promotes more than 22,000 personnel /A5

ABU SUSPECT linked to Marines' beheading falls /A6

ALIENS MAY get permits at offices outside Manila /A8

'Lakas finances shaky'

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

ASIDE FROM LACKING A POPULAR candidate who could lead the party in 2010, the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrat's shaky financial situation is forcing its members to consider jumping ship to other parties with deep pockets, like Kampi, President Macapagal-Arroyo's party.

A ranking Lakas official who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the subject, said a number of members were worried after the party postponed several times for lack of funds a national administration meeting during which the party was supposed to begin the selection process for its 2010 standard-bearer.

"The party is in disarray. If the party can't even hold a simple convention this year, members doubt if it could muster a national campaign in 2010. We don't even know if the convention will push through because members might choose not to attend," said the Lakas source.

Lakas stalwart Sen. Miguel Zubiri admitted the party was having financial difficulties because it had been unable to collect an installation from members and contributions.

Zubiri, however, said the Lakas convention was postponed not for lack of funds but because of scheduling problems.

He said the party had yet to pick a date on which its Big Three—President Arroyo, former President Fidel V. Ramos and Speaker Jose de Venecia—would be available.

Zubiri was optimistic the convention would push through next month.

The convention is seen as crucial to setting Lakas' strategy for making itself relevant after President Arroyo steps down in 2010.

The Lakas source said the party's dire financial situation was evident as early as during the May 2007 elections where Lakas bets had to line up at other parties' headquarters, most notably Kampi's, to obtain funds.

"We might have had the numbers but Kampi had the money in the last election because it had more contributors to politics, whoever has the gold rules," the source said.

Lakas' robust roster makes it a target of poaching by parties gearing up for the 2010 elections, such as Kampi, the Liberal Party and the Nacionalista Party.

Lakas was rumored last week when Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo's filed for indefinite leave from the party. He is expected to join his mother's party, Kampi, which apparently has ambitions of being a major political force next to its estranged ally Lakas in 2010.

Coffee with Kissinger awaits GMA in Davos

By Christine O. Avendaño

COFFEE WITH FORMER US SECRETARY OF State and Nobel laureate Henry Kissinger is one of several meetings that President Macapagal-Arroyo is looking forward to when she attends the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, this week.

Ms Arroyo and her party will leave shortly after noon today for a seven-day journey to Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates, but this trip outside the country this year could double her security officials' of a new plan to shield her administration.

Before she goes to the airport for her 12:30 p.m. departure today, the President will preside over a 10 a.m. meeting of the Cabinet to discuss economic concerns and poverty alleviation.

According to Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, Ms Arroyo's first stop will be Zurich, where she will be the keynote speaker before the Swiss Chamber of Commerce. She will also have a luncheon meeting with the International Board of Advisors.

From Zurich, the President will proceed in Davos on Jan. 24 where her first activity is an investment session with the World Economic Forum governors for information and communications technology.

After, Ms Arroyo will hold a series of meetings with Citigroup and Citibank chair William Rhodes, the Abraaj Group, World Trade Organization (WTO) Director-General Pascal Lamy and with WEF chief executive officers.

The President will earlier day having coffee with Kissinger, former US secretary of state during the term of the late President Richard Nixon. Kissinger won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1973 for his role in forging peace in Vietnam during the US Vietnam war.

On Jan. 25, President Arroyo will start her morning with a 30-minute live interview on Davos Today, a Business television program.

Like the previous day, she will be swamped with appointments that include a bilateral meeting with Thailand's Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej.

The highlight of the trip will be the address at his Arroyo before the high-level plenary session of the WEF.

"The President will be the main speaker at the high-level plenary. She will talk on the emerging Asian community and the role of Asean," Bunye told reporters.

She will hold other meetings with Prof. Klaus Schwab, who is executive chair and founder of WEF; UBS AG Group CEO Marcel Rohner; Japan International Cooperation Agency president Sadako Ogata, Aaron Sheinberg, Group Senior Principal, Chair and CEO of Coca-Cola FemSa Isdel, and Dominique Strauss-Khan who is managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Bunye said a possible meeting between Ms Arroyo and Britain's Prime Minister Gordon Brown was being finalized as press time.

He said the WEF "will provide an opportunity for the President to connect with political, business and other international leaders on a wide range of subjects of common concern [such as] the environment and [the] region."

After Davos, the President will proceed to Dubai for an investment road show according to Bunye.

At press time, Bunye had not released the President's schedule for Dubai but said the Chief Executive will return home on Jan. 28.

Mendoza insists new law would boost RP aviation

By Tarra Quismundo

GIVEN 48 DAYS TO IMPROVE the country's air safety rating, aviation executives said yesterday their success hinged heavily on the passage of a new law creating an independent Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP).

Setting an urgent chair of the Air Transportation Office (ATO), Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza said that a new law was key to luring more skilled technicians and improving equipment and processes needed to reverse the downgrading of aviation safety rating.

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in its recent International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) report, reclassified the Philippines as Category 2, or not going to comply with international safety standards.

Flaws found during a safety audit from July 23 to 27, 2007, included a lack of sound licensing, poor and aged equipment, performance procedures for the licensing and certification of aircraft, airmen and pilots, and a lack of training and retraining of airworthiness and pilot inspectors, among others. The FAA cited the country's lack of an updated aviation law as chief factor for the ATO's failure to comply with international standards.

The ATO still operates under a 1952 civil aviation law, which requires it to remit its earnings to the government and imposes a ceiling on the compensation of personnel in line with government salary standards.

ATO officials cited these budgetary restrictions and poor pay incentives as among the agency's hurdles in procuring new equipment and attracting highly qualified technical staff, including air worthiness and pilot inspectors and air traffic controllers.

"We can't fill the personnel requirements because of the low salary, those are no takers. But with the passage of the CAAP law, we can offer competitive compensation," said Mendoza in a press briefing at the ATO office.

He said positions at ATO were only half filled. Only 3,000 of 7,000 staff positions were occupied.

Because it pays much lower than commercial aviation firms, the ATO has been suffering a 90% turnover rate for highly technical personnel, Mendoza added.

Members said the bill's urgency. the CAAP bill has been passed by both the House and the Senate but yet did not make up for because Mendoza was optimistic and said, "We'll make it in three months. We'll make it."

If the ATO fails to immediately convince the FAA to reconsider the downgrade, Mendoza said the department might resort to "troubling the presidency." With a report by Maurice Malanes, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Patient care our priority, say docs

DECLARING THAT IT is their responsibility to take care of their patients, members of the Philippine Medical Association (PMA) have appealed to lawmakers to remove a provision in the cheaper medicines bill that would limit doctors to prescribing only the generic counterparts of branded medicines.

Despite criticism that doctors are opposing the policy on generics prescription in favor of multinational drug companies, some medical associations have supported the PMA's call for the government to grant them leeway in prescribing both branded and generic drugs to patients.

Truth should out

"We are here not because of self interest but because we want the truth to come out. Doctors are hurt when you accuse them of siding with multinational drug firms," said Dr. Minerva Dalida, president of the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology.

The 23,000-strong Philippine Dental Association, through its president, Dr. Hilario Blanco, expressed support for the PMA opposition to the proposed policy, saying that its passing would remove the prerogative of doctors and dentists to prescribe good drugs for their patients.

Effective cure

The doctors stressed that the passage of the bill with the contested provision would "disempower" physicians from giving effective treatment to their patients and, ultimately leave the patients dependent on decision made by drugstore clerks.

"The physician's role is taken over by the drugstore clerk who has neither the knowledge nor the training of a physician, but who must now assume responsibility for whatever errors are made at the drugstore counter," said the PMA in a statement. Beverly T. Natividad

Perfect teamwork lifts RP pair to World Cup glory

Front page A1

work and the team spirit. Jennifer and I enjoyed over the three days and it's a note we want to dedicate to the people of the Philippines," said Delanie, who like Ibañez also campaigns on the LPGA Tour in Asia.

Delanie sealed the victory with a 15-foot putt for birdie on the par-5 18th after pulling her drive in deep rough the right of the fairway. She threaded her second shot close to the trees onto the fairway and hit the green on her third shot.

'An angel with me'

"I had an angel with me," Delanie said of his second shot from the rough. "I never see it with my feet. I crossed my fingers and it went through."

Rivera went into the final hole needing an eagle to get back into the match. Shot's second shot aimed straight at the pin but it veered right and bounced off a rock in the water surrounding the island green.

The ball landed 30 feet from the flag, giving Shin an eagle shot and a chance to tie.

Shin missed but got the birdie, Rivera secured on a homeward time. Needing two pars for the victory, Delanie rolled in the former birdie to raise the winning margin to two.

Rookies and Delanie, both former Athlete of the Year awardees by the Philippine Sportswriters Association, actually came close to winning the event during its inaugural celebration in 2006.

They eventually settled for second in a tie with another Korean pair behind champion Japan. Delanie went on to team up with fellow Fil-Am Rio Quintos in 2006 with both narrowly before Rookies and Delanie joined up last year's event due to poor form.

Ironically, the two Filipinos fared just as badly in the last LPGA season with Delanie winning only $139,815 after making the cut only 16 times in 23 events and Rookies, hamstrung by a sprained wrist, earning only $36,564 by finishing only as of 16 tournaments she joined.

Change in format

But the two former national team standouts believe they both turned pro in 2006 thrived under the new format this year. They earned title in the first half after best scores of the player-rivaled hole contest format in the first and third rounds and had a 66 in the more difficult four-some (alternate shots on one hole) play in the second round.

The Filipinos' winning finish was the reverse of the opening nine holes. Shin scored an eagle three on the 18th and a birdie on the par-4 sixth, to pressure the Philippines' players, who got birdies on holes 1 and 5.

"We were kind of shaky on the front nine," Delanie said. "The putts we got in set, seven and nine were crucial. They could so easily have been bogeys, but once we survived that hit, we started having fun again."

Rookies birdied the 11th and 12th to bring them level before the Koreans got a birdie at the 14th.

Then Ibañez took over with birdies on the 13th, 14th, 17th and 18th.

Japan finished with an eagle at the 18th from Maki Imada for a 7-under 65. Imada's final two drop a shot for its final round 66.

France's Gwladys Nocera and Virginie Lagoutte-Clement finished on 205 with a 67 to take fifth place, while South Africa, Canada and Wales shared sixth on 206. South Africa finished with a 66 between Lincomi Marais and Ashleigh Simon, Canada's Lorie Kane and Alena Sharp came home in 69, and Becky Brewerton and Becky Morgan shot a 68 for Wales.

Juli Inkster and Pat Hurst of the United States shot six birdies and a bogey for a 67 and second 67. They 209 pars them a share of 13th with Scotland. —Reports from AP and AFP

STUDENTS dance on the streets of Pilisan, Pangasinan, to celebrate the "Talong" festival. AP PHOTO/BULLIT

Pangasinan town honors eggplant

From page A1

how on growing that the vegetable—its main fruit product—can be cooked in a hundred different ways.

At the cook-fest during the Third Talong Festival on Friday, 22 recipes, with eggplant as the main ingredient, were prepared and entered by representatives of different barangays.

This would bring the total number of original recipes featuring the versatile vegetable to 65, said Glendalyn Almonia, chair of the town fiesta's executive committee.

When the number of recipes reaches 100, the local government will publish a recipe book, according to Almonia.

"Every year, the entries get better ... more versatile. The presentation has improved, too. There are [also] unusual entries," she said.

This year's first prize was bagged by Pozzlar village with its version called "Hidden Talong Mix."

Linda Bautista, the group's leader, said she got her inspiration from fresh, cheesestuffed ice cubes filled with mango (beans) and ube (yam).

She revealed the recipe to the layman: Blend and mash eggplant. Mix mashed eggplant with shredded carrots, chopped hotdog and pork, spices and seasonings. Take hard-boiled quail eggs, halve them and remove the yolk. Fill eggs with eggplant mixture. Roll eggs in uncooked glutinous rice and coconut milk and then steam for 45 minutes.

The Hidden Talong is best paired with malunggay (moringa) juice, a concoction of boiled malunggay leaves, honey and calamansi juice.

The second prize was won by Camarvalan with its concoction called Eggplant Con Yelgina while the third prize was to Inspectors Time 1 and its Eggplant Pizza and Ana Nicolas with its Sun Goring sun Talong.

The rest of the entries, some interesting but mostly delicious, were Talong bagis, eggplant nuggets, processing Talong (cooked eggplant), eggplant salad, eggplant ice-cream, talong rings, eggplant fillers, fried eggplant with rolling bread crumbs, animal (as talong, raisin and ant).

"These recipes prove that eggplant is a versatile vegetable. I am proud that the residents are able to come up with all these recipes," Almonia said.

"Parents with picky kids will appreciate these new recipes because their children will love eating vegetables," she added.

Most of the five judges in the cook-fest included Filipino-residents-turn-foreigners, including Fe Prado Nardini who, together with her husband Giuliano, owns a restaurant called Ristorante Pizzeria I Nardini in Tuscany, Italy.

"Our restaurant have a camping area visited by different nationalities like Dutch, English and German. They like to try new dishes and I hope to introduce these eggplant recipes to them," Nardini said.

Corrections

IN THE DEC. 22 ISSUE, an article and caption on Page C3 of the Inquirer Special Section—"Valentin tones evil, it spirit of the holidays"—erroneously identified the composer of the Christmas carol, "Ang Pasko ay Sumapit." The song was composed by Vicente Bello—not Levi Celerio. Celerio wrote the Tagalog lyrics of the song, which was originally in Cebuano.

IN THE JAN. 17 ISSUE, a front page article—"Military spotting Lahars may signal ..." [illegible] contained wrong congressional district represented by Rufus Rodriguez. He represents the second district of Cagayan de Oro City—not Cagayan province.

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors or writing to the Lay Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 888 Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Elizondo Street, Makati City, 1200; telefax: (632) 896-6214; e-mail address: dyedesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Letty Kalaw-Tirol, readers' advocate, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph or fax No. (632) 410-0454. Inquirer Mindanao's address: 160 phone number is (02) 8896-6000 local 342.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE
Quezon City

January 8, 2008

REVENUE MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 12-2008

SUBJECT : Reiterating the requirement for the Submission of Tax Identification Number (TIN) and other BIR-Prescribed Returns/Documents As Conditions for the Issuance/Renewal of Mayor's Permit/ License/Privilege Tax Receipt by the Concerned Local Government Unit.

TO : All Municipal/City Mayors/Treasurers of Local Government Units and Others Concerned.

I. BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Section 4 of the 1997 National Internal Revenue Code (Code), as amended, in relation to Section 236 thereof; Executive Order No. 98 dated April 28, 1999; and, Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) dated March 2, 2001 entered into by and among the DOF, BIR, DILG, League of Provinces of the Philippines, League of Cities of the Philippines, League of Municipalities of the Philippines, and Liga ng mga Barangay ng Pilipinas regarding commitment of all parties to help one another in the implementation of strategies to enhance tax enforcement and collection efforts as circularized under RMC 21-2001; and, DILG Circular No. 2001-33, the LGUs are required and have agreed to assist the BIR in monitoring tax compliance by requiring the submission of Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) as well as other BIR-prescribed returns/documents as conditions precedent to the issuance of mayor's permits to business registrants or privilege tax receipts (PTR) to professionals.

II. REQUIREMENT FOR THE SUBMISSION/PRESENTATION OF COPY OF TAXPAYER'S TIN AND OTHER BIR-PRESCRIBED RETURNS/DOCUMENTS BEFORE ISSUANCE OF MAYOR'S PERMIT/ LICENSE TO OPERATE BUSINESS/PRIVILEGE TAX RECEIPT BY THE OFFICE OF THE CITY/MUNICIPAL MAYOR/TREASURER OF THE CONCERNED LGU.

Before any new application for mayor's permit/license/PTR or renewal thereof may be given due course, the Office of the City or Municipal Mayor/Treasurer of the concerned LGU shall first require the submission of photocopy/presentation of the original (for authentication) of the following documents:

(a) For initial application:

1) Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);
2) BIR-issued Certificate of Registration (COR);
3) Proof of Payment of Annual Registration Fee (P500) per establishment paid to the BIR.

(b) For renewal:

1) Documents listed in Item (a)(1) to (3) above;
2) Annual Income Tax Return (ITR) with proof that it has been duly filed and paid with the BIR collecting agent, covering the taxable year where the prescribed return is duly filed in the year immediately preceding the renewal of the mayor's permit/license to operate a business/Privilege Tax Receipt;
3) Monthly/quarterly VAT declarations/returns or monthly percentage tax returns, whichever is applicable, pertinent to the year immediately preceding the year of renewal.

The application for issuance of mayor's permit/business license as well as the subsequent renewal thereof shall not be processed by the Office of the City/Municipal Mayor/Treasurer unless all documentary requirements as above set forth have been submitted.

In the case of professionals applying for privilege tax receipts (PTR), the same documents shall be required by the Office of the City/Municipal Treasurer where, likewise, full compliance thereon is necessary before the application for the issuance of PTR may be given due course.

All concerned are hereby enjoined to be guided accordingly and give this circular as wide a publicity as possible.

CILIAN B. HONTI
Commissioner of Internal Revenue

Police force promotes more than 22,000 personnel

By Nikko Dizon

BY FAR THE largest number of newly promoted "Illustrious Men" (IM), Police-man(...22,412 of them—were sworn in yesterday.

"It's a cycle (promotion) that happens in the PNP," Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon Jr. said at a press conference following the mass oath-taking held at the organization's headquarters in Camp Crame, Quezon City. "However, we have noted that this year has the biggest group," he added.

Razon said the policemen, who were promoted to the next higher grade, comprised 18 percent or nearly one fifth of the 120,000-strong police force.

"This is also in recognition of the outstanding accomplishments of the PNP as reflected in its achievements last year," Razon said. "This is good news, especially because of its positive effect on the morale and welfare of our personnel."

The families of some of the promoted policemen were present at the oath-taking ceremonies, with the lucky ones allowed to pin the new insignias on the honorees' blue uniforms.

The PNP said that of the newly promoted personnel, 1,067 were commissioned officers while 20,578 were non-commissioned officers.

Their promotions took effect on Dec. 31, 2007, with retroactive adjustments to July 16, 2007.

Police Director Edgardo Aceña, PNP director for personnel and records management, said the promotions were issued under the 2007 Regular Promotion Program.

He said that last year, 29,013 slots were available for filling by officers promoted to the next rank, but only 22,412 of those who applied for promotion were found to be qualified by the national and regional promotion boards.

The applicants of policemen with pending criminal and administrative cases and deficiencies in Qualification Standards, such as time-in-grade, length of service, and mandatory training, were denied, Aceña said.

Directors urged the nation's police force to "strive for excellence" in performing the organization's mission of preserving and serving the people, adding that the public expected no less from the police.

"We must not fail the people," Razon said.

NEWLY promoted Police Supt. Marvin Marcos cuddles his two-month-old baby, "Jun-Jun," as his wife Marilou pins his new rank on his collar during ceremonies at Camp Crame yesterday. —JC

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Abu suspect linked to Marines' beheading falls

By Nikko Dizon

A SUSPECTED LEADER OF THE AL-QAEDA-linked Abu Sayyaf terrorist group wanted for the beheading of 14 Marines in Basilan last year was arrested by the police over the weekend in Shariff Kabunsuan.

Asnawi Sulaymani, described by authorities as one of the country's most-wanted criminals with a P500,000 bounty on his head, was presented to the media yesterday by Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon Jr.

Handcuffed and guarded by police commandos, Sulayman, 30, smiled as photographers and TV cameramen jostled to take his picture.

Sulaymani was arrested at noon on Saturday by joint police-intelligence operatives and military security forces in the town of Datu Odin Sinsuat.

Among those who took part in the operations led by the Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (Pacer) team were agents of the Philippine Army's Intelligence and Security Group, the Army's 6th Infantry Division and the Armed Forces' 6th Military Intelligence Battalion.

Sulaymani had been posing as a tricycle driver, the usual cute of suspected criminals in Mindanao, said Senior Insp. Leonardo Espina, Pacer chief.

Espina said Sulaymani's arrest resulted from intensive intelligence operations conducted by Pacer dubbed "Oplan Shoppers" designed to arrest wanted Abu Sayyaf members.

"Sulaymani was a team leader of those who took part in the ambush and the beheadings. Evident is the fact that he has a sizeable reward on his head," said Espina at the media briefing at PNP headquarters in Camp Crame.

Espina said that during investigation, Sulaymani admitted being a member of the Abu Sayyaf and taking part in the ambush of the Marines, but he stopped short of confessing to the soldiers' beheading.

PNP Director General Avelino Razon Jr. (right, second) presents Asnawi Sulayman, an alleged member of the Abu Sayyaf to the media, at police headquarters at Camp Crame, Quezon City. Sulayman had a P500,000 bounty on his head.

Espina said Sulaymani was an Abu Sayyaf "subleader" in Tuburan, Basilan, under group leader Furad Tedtasa, who himself has a P2-million price on his head from the US government and another P5 million from the Philippine government.

"But Abu Sayyaf subleaders are the ones who give orders and their orders participate in (atrocities) like beheadings," Espina said.

Sulaymani was among 128 suspected Abu Sayyaf narcotics screened by a screeners of arrest issued by Basilan Regional Trial Court Branch 1 for nine counts of murder and four counts of frustrated murder in connection with the beheading of the Marines in July last year, Espina said.

The Marines were part of a military convoy that was ambushed in Barangay Ginamin, in Al-Barka town, after a futile search for kidnapped Italian priest Giancarlo Bossi. The priest has since been released.

Court takes up ex-Marine's amparo plea

By DJ Yap

A MAKATI COURT WILL HEAR today the arguments for and against the grant of a writ of amparo in a former Marine implicated in the Nov. 29, 2007, takeover of the Peninsula Manila hotel by a rebel military group led by Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV.

Former Private First Class Arvin Colentino, who has been accorded protective custody by the court, is expected to be brought before Judge Elmo Alameda of Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 150 for the 9 a.m. hearing.

The court last Thursday issued a temporary protection order for Colentino, who was arrested at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport on Dec. 3 as he was about to leave for Virginia, USA, where a job as a lifeguard awaited him.

Alameda also ordered Colentino's transfer from the custody of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) to the Philippine National Police Custodial Management Unit.

Colentino was allegedly among the rebel group led by Trillanes and Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim that walked out of a Makati courtroom and marched in the streets to the Peninsula Manila hotel on Ayala Avenue where they held out for seven hours.

Trillanes, Lim and the others have since been charged with rebellion and are being held at the PNP Custodial Center in Quezon City.

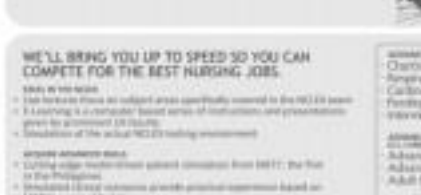
On the other hand, Colentino has been detained at the Isafp detention center.

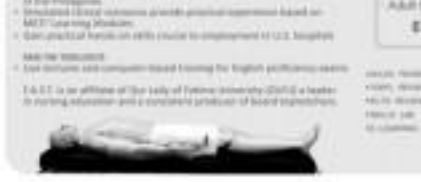
On Dec. 19, Colentino's siblings, Melissa and Arnolfo, filed a petition seeking a writ of amparo on behalf of their brother, who they said was illegally arrested without a warrant at the base when he arrived to take his flight.

After his arrest, Colentino was turned over to the AFP and charged with rebellion.

His siblings said Colentino was kept in solitary confinement and refused to board or visit requisitor.

They claimed he was also being pressured to replace his lawyer, Reynaldo Robles, with another lawyer "who will readily cooperate with the government."





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ENROLLMENT GOING ON

fAST

Nation marks Manansala's 98th birth anniversary today

SEOUL—THE NATIONAL MUseum Institute, Friends of Manansala Foundation Inc. and the Rizal provincial government will spearhead the commemoration of the 98th birth anniversary of National Artist Vicente Manansala today in Binangonan.

Prof. Andrelli Dimapis, MMI chair, will give the welcome remarks while Soni Manzala, an artist with the Angono Arts Circle, will give a short talk. Rizal Gov. Casimiro Ynares III will deliver a short message and Mariana Pineda, Friends of Manansala president, will give the closing remarks.

Manansala, one of the finest Filipino painters and sculptors, was born in Macabebe, Pampanga, on Jan. 22, 1910, to Doctora Manansala and Dr. Pancio Silva. He spent his childhood in Intramuros where, at the age of 11, he learned to earn a living by selling newspapers and shining shoes.

Later, he enrolled at the University of the Philippines School of Fine Arts from which he graduated in 1938 at the age of 28, the youngest in the class.

He then went to work as a billboard painter, illustrator and layout artist in various publications.

In 1937, he married Hermenegilda Diaz and they had one child.

His career as a painter blossomed when his "Pounding Rice" won the grand prize in a national exhibition at the University of Santo Tomas. Manansala went on to take art fellowships and grants both in the country and abroad to perfect his craft.

He gained prestigious local and international exhibitions that brought him recognition. The government conferred on him the National Artist Award for Visual Arts on Aug. 27, 1981, five days after his death.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, January 22, 2008
2nd Week in Ordinary Time
Memorial

1st Reading: 1 S 15:1-34
Gospel: Mk 3:22-30

"Our sabbath he was walking through grainfields. As his disciples walked along with him, they began to pick the heads of grain and rub them in their hands. Then the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Look! they are doing what is forbidden on the sabbath!"

And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did to his three of same, when he and his men were very hungry? He went into the house of God when Abiathar was High Priest and ate the bread of offering, which only the priests are allowed to eat, and he also gave some to the men who were with him." Then Jesus said to them, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. So the Son of Man is master even of the sabbath."

Commentary:

We call someone "pharisaical" if that person is overly concerned with petty things. Such a person usually is so focused upon minor transgressions that he or she fails to see the bigger picture, and misses seeing redeeming qualities about the person who is being criticized.

May God grant us supreme such pettiness! May we spend our time on the things in life that really matter, and not waste our time worrying about unimportant things. God gives us the gift of time, twenty-four precious hours in every day. May we be good stewards of that important gift.

BFAD bans Viagra-like herbal food supplement

THE BUREAU OF FOOD AND Drugs has ordered the recall of Potenx, a herbal supplement for men, for having Viagra-like effects even when it is marketed only as a food supplement.

In an advisory, the BFAD ordered inspectors and distributors of Potenx to retrieve the product from the market. It also advised users of the product to discontinue its use.

The BFAD said its tests showed Potenx contained sildenafil citrate, an active ingredient in prescription drugs for erectile dysfunction.

Potenx, it said, is only marketed as a food supplement and thus should not contain an ingredient found in prescription drug products.

"It is not supposed to have any traces of that because it is an active ingredient of drugs with Viagra-like effects. If it has that ingredient then they [makers and distributors] are trying to fool us," said Joshua Ramos, BFAD director III.

The BFAD said patients with diabetes, heart disease and hypertension may be at risk if they take the food supplement containing sildenafil citrate.

Drugs with sildenafil citrate, it said, may be bought only with prescriptions issued by doctors. —Beverly T. Mendoland

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Erap: God is punishing the country

Front page A1

"God knows how to make people suffer also," the 72-year-old deposed President told the hotshots. "So our country is what it is now because the head of the Church went against God's will. Our country is not moving forward."

Estrada was reacting to an interview story quoting a highly placed source as saying that the Vatican had told Lim in 2000 that it did not want the Philippines Roman Catholic Church to get involved in the anti-Estrada uprising.

Paired with the "order" from the Vatican, Lim had threatened to excommunicate Manila archbishop if forced to withdraw Church support for the Edsa upheaval, the source said.

The ultimatum was resolved after a meeting with Vatican representatives, according to the source.

A confused Inquirer source in Edsa also confirmed there was a directive from the Vatican for Lim and the rest of the Philippine clergy "not to be partisan" during the 2001 uprising.

The unnamed source said the order must have come from "higher" than the Philippine desk at the Vatican's foreign affairs office "but I don't think it was the Pope."

His died in July 2005.

"Unlike by Erda I am vindicated and hopefully I will be easily vindicated to the end," Estrada said.

God's will

Estrada, who was convicted of plunder last September but was later granted presidential pardon, made the remark in an "God speaking" when he ruminated the presidency in 1998 after posting one of the biggest vote margins in the history of Philippine presidential elections.

"Ate popak, sec Dri (The people are the voice of God)," Estrada said.

Estrada was ousted from power on Jan. 20, 2001, following accusations of corruption.

A chapter in his book

Estrada also said he was devoting a chapter about the Erap. order to Sin in the book he was writing, which was reportedly to be published by the end of the year.

"Dumadaan siguro sila sa interpret (You must rise to the story). I was no reward (but to my mouth), especially," he said light-heartedly, adding he had known about the Vatican order even before the fateful week when he made his gloomy exit from Malacañang.

Citing the story of how in public, Estrada said that the Church that wooed him six times in many politics in 1967 was the same Church that caused his downfall.

He recalled that a parish priest in San Juan—Msgr. Godfrey Quevedo—had acted to convince him, when he was still a movie actor, to run for mayor.

"I really hoodied (him) on his sixth visit," he said.

Cruz disputes report

"But I don't mean that the whole Church is to be blamed for our country's situation now. The fault of Cardinal Sin is not the fault of the entire Church," Estrada said.

The Inquirer called the Chancery of the Daily Sun in Intramuros on exchange traffic said that Papal Nuncio Edward Joseph Adams was not available for comment.

The staffer said the embassy would not comment on "some thing that happened in the past."

For her part, a senior Filipino prelate, Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar V. Cruz, yesterday said he was sure the Vatican had not ordered Sin to back off from Edsa II.

"I am certain that there was no such order because the Holy Father did not need to order Cardinal Sin to do anything. It would be enough for the Holy Father to say this and Cardinal Sin would stop. I know him (Sin) that well," Cruz said in person.

Unquestioned obedience

Cruz, who had worked closely with Sin as his auxiliary bishop in Manila, said Sin revered the Pope and his obedience to the Holy See was unquestioned.

"The cardinal was not a person who will negotiate with the Vatican if it says so or not issue," he said.

Cruz also said the Vatican did not have any reason to order the Philippine Church to detach its support for Edsa II.

For one, he said, Sin's focus was not on politics per se but on the moral issue concerning the Estrada administration.

Even Pope John Paul II, Cruz said, also intervened in his na- tive country Poland on Edsa the spread of communism. Sin, comparatively, should also feel free to intervene in the moral dimension of the Philippine government because this was his country.

Papal Nuncio was there

A source at the Archdiocese of Manila, who asked not to be identified, not being privy to the issue, said it was unlikely the Vatican had frowned on Sin's role in Edsa II.

The source said that if the Vatican had opposed Church participation, "how come Archbishop Antonio Franco, the Apostolic Nuncio then and therefore envoy of the Pope, was present in (Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's) oath-taking at the Edsa Shrine, in pictures of the event shows?"

The source added that what came from the Vatican at the time was an aide memoire to the Department of Foreign Affairs containing a statement or an opinion by a senior Vatican official about the participation of the clergy in political affairs.

With a report from Cynthia D. Balloso

Lim says Marines, not police, fired at protesters

Front page A1

But presenting for classified his role in the security plan, saying that he was "not responsible" for the shooting of the protesters.

Oplan Yellow

"Under Oplan Yellow handed by Gen. Romeo Mendoza, who was the chief of the Capital Regional Command (CapCom), the chatter classroom were given different tasks. As PNP commander, my responsibility was to guard the boundaries of Manila," Lim said.

"But CapCom through Oplan Yellow, he said, took over the security of Malacañang and its vicinity.

When some 10,000 militants, who marched from Sen. Domingo Church in Quezon City, arrived Manila peacefully, Lim said he returned to his headquarters to rest but was forced a phone call from Camp Crame [the national police headquarters] asking him to relay a message to Mendoza.

"There were reports of armed men who infiltrated the rally. My instructions was to relay the message," he said.

Company-strong Marines

Upon arrival at the CapCom post where he was met by Mendoza, Lim said he was told by the general to tell Jimmy Bolero, who was the Philippine Marine battalion in Philippine (BMP) to form a 15-man group that would meet with then Executive Secretary Ishui Ronyo in Malacañang.

He indicated that negotiations were supposed to take place between the two groups.

"The Marines, about a company strong, occupied the Mendiola Bridge," he said, describing the scene. "The police were at the foot of the bridge, on the road," he said.

Explosion

Lim then called WPD Deputy Supt. Edgar Dula Yano and a Colonel Francisco to relay Mendoza's orders on Tudor's 15-man team.

"When they walked away after less than a minute, there was a huge explosion. The marchers ran to the bridge. They surged. The Marines might have panicked. They fired and fired [their rifles]. Pandemonium broke loose," he narrated.

Blaming back to the top of the bridge, Lim said he witnessed the soldiers who began firing at the protesters.

Stop firing

"I said stop firing, stop firing. But they did not heed my orders. I saw their commander a certain Major Dayondel. I approached him. I told him 'you better order your men to stop firing.' He bashed 'stop firing?' and the firing completely stopped," said Lim, then a police brigadier general.

In an estimates 2000 report on the Mendiola Massacre that appeared in a major daily, the head of the Marine Civil Disturbance Control Battalion was identified as "Maj. Wilmon Carreño" "from Fort Pantaleón."

Lim said that the firing lasted less than five minutes and that it began when the explosion believed to be from a pillbox was thrown by the battalion's group.

"They had not yet met Tudor when the blast happened. It came from the culprit's. Maybe it was their signal because they ran afterward," he said.

When the smoke cleared, 13 persons lay dead on the pavement while scores were injured from bullets or matchsticks.

Investigation

Immediately after the carnage, then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo issued Administrative Order No. 11 creating the Citizens' Mendiola Commission to investigate the bloodbath.

The commission, said Lim, was where Major [Reynaldo] admitted to giving the order to the soldiers to fire.

"He gave the order in fine because the protesters were approaching. His justification was their safety as they could be overrun," he said.

The commission's findings, however, only recommended the prosecution of four unidentified uniformed men based on tapes and video footage where they were seen firing at the farmers.

It also recommended the preservation of the affidavit of the PNP and the Integrated Bureau of Police field force, including Lim, Dula Yano, BIP commander Maj. Bernardo de la Cruz, IMF chief Col. Cesar Natanzon, and Marine Civil Disturbance Control battalion commander Maj. Pelmore Gonzales.

Damage suit

Lim was also named respondent in a P6.5-million damage suit filed by the victims' families, but it was dismissed in 1998 by the Supreme Court on the ground of the government's immunity from suit.

To those who continue to say that he had farmers' blood on his hands, Lim said: "They are raising their statements consistent not on facts and evidence. There were cases filed against me civilly and criminally but they were dismissed."

For today's commemoration of the Mendiola massacre, the mayor said he directed the Manila Police District director, Chief Supt. Rosales, that all officers and men "should be disarmed" to avoid a repeat of the carnage.

"Because if you bring a gun, your immediate reaction is to use it to retaliation. I told them, 'if you will be verbally abused, [just ignore it]. Let it pass through your left ear and out of your right," he said.

KILLERS run for their lives as government security troops fire into their ranks during a rally in Mendiola on Jan. 22, 1991.

ON THE EVE of the 21st anniversary of the Mendiola massacre, heavy security is enforced by Manila policemen at the Chino Roces Bridge.

What Went Before

A PEASANT RALLY FOR "genuine land reform" turned into a massacre when antiriot forces guarding Malacañang Palace fired at about 10,000 farmers and their supporters on Mendiola Bridge (now Don Chino Roces Bridge) in Manila on Jan. 22, 1987.

Thirteen farmers were killed in the riot: Leopoldo Alonzo, Adolfo Aquino, Emilio Aquino, Dionisio Bacalso, Victoriano Campo-ranes, Roberto Ceyfino, Benito Clemeño, Dante Evangelio, Rodrigo Guevarra, Angelito Ramos, Bernabe Limpiadoraus, Jimmy Roy Pérez and Hubert Natural. About 80 others were wounded.

Pandemonium broke loose when protesters attempted to breach the barricades set up by members of the Philippine Marines, Integrated National Police and Western Police District, according to the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP).

An explosion reportedly occurred, followed by the hailing of pillboxes, stones and bottles, and firing of guns by authorities.

Then President Corazon Aquino immediately created the Citizens' Mendiola Commission, headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Vicente Abad Santos, to investigate the killings.

The commission recommended administrative sanctions against leaders of the security personnel. It also called for the prosecution of those who had fired weapons and of rally leaders who had failed to secure a permit for the protest action.

However, no charges against the soldiers and police were filed by the government.

A year after the carnage, the KMP filed a P7-million damage suit against the Aquino administration and top military and police officials at the Manila Regional Trial Court.

Included in the complaint were Maj. Gen. Ramon Montaño, chief of the National Capital Region Defense Command; Brig. Gen. Alexander Aguirre, chief of the Capital Regional Command; Brig. Gen. Rogelio Pacubas of the Marines, and Brig. Gen. Alfredo Lim, WPD superintendent.

But the court, citing the government's immunity from suit, dismissed the complaint in 1998. The Supreme Court later upheld this decision and dismissed the case with finality. *—Cyrell L. Bonalbron, Inquirer Research*

Burgos mom tells court AFP behind son's kidnap

Front page A1

publicly accused soldiers of being behind the abduction and would step up nothing short of an admission from the military.

"I disagree. I am looking for the truth, and the truth points to them. I have evidence," said Edita.

Burgos, 57, son of the late publisher and poet Jacobo Burgos and Jose "Joe" Burgos, was abducted on April 28 last year from the Governor's shopping mall in Quezon City.

His mother has asked the court to issue the writ to allow her access to military camps, documents and personnel, and to direct the police to help in his inquiry.

A writ of amparo is a remedy made available by the Supreme Court last year to those whose lives, liberty and security are threatened in the government's counterinsurgency campaign that has led to a surge in disappearances and political killings.

Named respondents in Edita's amparo petition were Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Esperon Jr., Philippine Army Commanding General Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano, Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon Jr. and Commission on Human Rights Chair Purificacion Quisumbing.

In her testimony, Edita said President Macapagal-Arroyo herself told her during a phone conversation that if she requested help from Esperon, her search would be futile.

But Edita said a meeting set between her lawyer and Esperon did not push through and the person had since denied the military's hand in its custody.

Esperon appearance opposed

Edita's lawyer Rowena Fernandez asked the Court of Appeals to subpoena Esperon, Yano and 56th Infantry Battalion Commanding Officer Lt. Col. Melquiadez Feliciano to testify in the next hearing.

The lawyer said the testimonies of these officers could shed light on two cases—that Jonas was abducted by the military or that he was taken by members of the New People's Army.

Tang opposed Fernandez's request.

Fernandez also said the military had been "evasive" on Edita's allegation that operatives Jed Ia. Ilodo Aldeen had been detained and awaiting court-martial for allegedly passing on information to the NPA, and that his fate could be linked to Jonas'.

Edita also said Maj. Gen. Delfin Bangit, then chief of the Intelligence Service of the AFP had assured her that he would help in the search for Jonas and that the latter was not considered an enemy of the state.

Yet a document submitted by Esperon to the Commission on Human Rights labeled Jonas as a member of the NPA who also goes by the moniker "Ka Ronnie," she added.

Neutralized

Another Burgos lawyer, Roberto Lara, noted that Edita had obtained a document purporting to show that 1st Lt. Jaime Mendoza Jr. had neutralized the abductor of Jonas' name from a list. The documents showed that Jonas was also known as "Ronnie, Diamond or Simon," and then beside his name was the term "neutralized."

Tang asked Edita whether she knew that the police had referred to the Department of Justice the affidavit of three alleged NPA members who said Jonas was abducted by the group.

One of the alleged NPA members supposedly said a Delfin de Guzman had ordered Jonas' abduction, but Edita said De Guzman had been arrested in 2006.

Aliens may get permits at offices outside Manila

By Lolibi Sabeniola

FOREIGNERS STAYING outside Metro Manila could not go to the Bureau of Immigration office in Intramuros to get their work and study permits.

The BI has set up alien control offices in Laoag, Baguio, Cebu and Davao cities to accept, process and approve applications for work and study permit from foreign workers and students who live near the areas.

Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan said the bureau authorized the offices to decentralize its operations and make its services more accessible to foreigners.

Decentralized

"As a result of this decentralized scheme, workers and foreign students residing in various parts of Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao need no longer travel all the way to Manila to apply for their work and study permits," Libanan said in a statement.

Libanan said Davao, Laoag, Baguio and Cebu were chosen because of the large concentration of foreign workers and students in those cities.

He said he was looking into the possibility of decentralizing most of the bureau's services and delegating more responsibilities to alien control officers that have to do with the processing and approval of other immigration documents.

Those documents could include applications for extensions of stay by foreign tourists, as visa in the provinces, he said.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. The PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY, (an Extra-ECONOMIC ZONE OFFICE (BEZ), through its Corporate Budget for the CY 2000 intends to apply the sum of **Php 2,500,000.00** being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the **Solid Waste Collection and Hauling at the Bataan Export Processing Zone** (BEPZ), Mariveles, Bataan. The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) was derived from the base rate of P87.00 per cubic meter of solid waste times the computed volume of 12,000.00 cubic meter of solid waste generated per month at the Bataan Export Processing Zone (BEPZ). Those cubic meter shall be subdivided/as reported at Bid Opening.
2. The PEZA-BEZ now invites sealed Bids from Eligible Bidders for the above mentioned contract as described below:
   Brief Description: Supply of Labor, Tools Equipment and Supervision
   Contract Duration: One (1) year
   Delivery Period: Within 10 days after Notice to Proceed
   The description of an eligible bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, **INSTRUCTION TO BIDDERS (ITB)**.
3. Bidding shall be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of RA 9184 otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act.
   Bidding is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, partnerships, or organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act No. 5183 as amended by Executive Order No. 584 (E.O. 584), Series of 1993. The Bids from Bidders who have passed the eligibility screening procedure. The procedure for the conduct of eligibility screening is provided in the Bidding Documents (ITB). The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall submit within the time prescribed in the Bidding Documents, the following: (1) Valid and current Mayor's/Business Permit; (2) Valid and current Tax Clearance per Executive Order No. 398, Series of 1998; and (3) Valid and current Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) License and Registration for the type of project.
4. Interested bidders may obtain further information from PEZA-BEZ and examine the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from 10 to 14 January 2000 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00)**.
6. It is the responsibility of each Bidder to determine for itself the site conditions and other matters which can affect its Bid. Failure of the Bidder to carry out such examination of site conditions shall not be a basis for subsequent disqualification of the Bidder or termination of the Contract for default.
7. The PEZA-BEZ will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on January 17, 2000 at 10:00 a.m. at the Conference Room, 2nd Floor, BEZ Administration Building, BEPZ, Mariveles, Bataan.
8. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before 11:00 a.m. on February 08, 2000. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form of cash, manager's check, cashier's check, irrevocable letter of credit or bid bond in the amount of not less than Php 50,000.00. Bond Guarantee in the amount of Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000.00) or in the form of Surety Bond callable on demand of Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00) shall be required.
9. Bid opening shall be on the day of the deadline of submission of Bids at the BEZ Administration Building, BEZ Mariveles, Bataan. Bids will be opened in the presence of Bidders' representatives who choose to attend the activity.
10. In case any of the above dates is declared a special non-working holiday, it will automatically be moved to the next working day.
11. The PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Philippine Economic Zone Authority-BEZ
Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat
2340 Gil Puyat, Diosdado Macapagal Ave.
Administration Building, BEZ, Mariveles, Bataan
Tel. No. (047) 811-2233 to 35 loc. 2070/2072/2080
E-mail: bac_bez@yahoo.com
Website: www.peza.gov.ph

(Sgd.) **LEONARDO T. SABIO**
BEZ-DBAC Chairman

Noted:
(Sgd.) **DANTE M. GUINGGUING**
Zone Administrator

Association of the Philippine NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY

Regional Office I
San Jose, La Union

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

FOR THE PROCUREMENT OF TRUCKING/HAULING SERVICES FOR MOVE OF LESS "1M MILLION BALE OF IMPORTED RICE FROM PORT OF SAN FERNANDO CITY, LA UNION TO NFA-LA UNION I (SUBIC BOUND) FOR THE PERIOD (WEST DISPERSAL TO BE EXACT FIBALAGAN WAREHOUSES – (VENUE I)

PROJECTS	SECTIONS	DISTANCE (KM)	COST (KM) (Move to Subic - Angat)	QUANTITY (%)	AMOUNT (P)
A. From Port/Rail to Staging Warehouse in La Union					
1.1 Delivery	San Juan - NFA Office	7.0	125.000	50.00	1,731,000.00
	San Juan	10.0	125.000	50.00	2,362,500.00
	Bacnotan	30.0	125.000	50.00	3,150,000.00
	Aringay	40.1	125.000	50.00	3,131,250.00
	Bauang		125.000	50.00	1,181,250.00
Sub-Total			1,500.000		13,512,000.00
B. Short Dispersal from Port/Rail to Final Destination					
2.1 Delivery(Subic)	Bacnotan - Bitalag	30.0	125.000	50.00	1,687,500.00
	Bacnotan - Bitalag	30.0	125.000	50.00	1,687,500.00
Sub-Total			125.000		3,375,000.00
TOTAL			1,625.000		16,775,700.00
Add: 5% VAT					1,174,254.00
APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT (ABC)					P 17,949,144.00

All bond costs must be included in Trucks for Rent (TR) with All Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB). The prospective bidder may bid to any or all the delivery/ies upon payment of a non-refundable application fee of Two Thousand Pesos (P2,000.00).

For completion of the documents, pre-bidding conference and bidding process shall be conducted at NFA Regional Office I Conference Room, San Juan, La Union on the following activity/ies:

	ACTIVITIES	DATE	TIME
1.	Issuance of Bidding Documents	January 03, 2000	8:00AM - 5:00PM
2.	Pre-Bidding Conference Deadline of Submission of Eligibility Requirements/Bidding Documents	January 07, 2000 January 11, 2000	10:00 AM 10:00 AM

Eligibility criteria includes: among others shall the value of the prospective bidder's single largest contract for the last one (1) year, adjusted to current price, completed within the period and similar to the contract to be bid, should be at least fifty percent (50%) of the Approved Budget for the Contract to be bid.

Bidding shall be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using the non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR-B) of Republic Act 9184 otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act".

Prospective bidders must be registered with NFA in any duly for registration with January 03, 2000 at the Licensing Section of the NFA provincial office where their business is/ are situated.

The NFA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, to waive any formalities or defects found therein or to accept such bids in its favor to any contractor without any liability to the affected bidder or bidders. Failure of the Government to so declare the bidding a failure prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. MARILOU T. DIZO**
Administrator, Regional Office I

INQUIRER

OPINION

Better legacy

EDITORIAL

SEN. JOKER ARROYO THE OTHER DAY URGED President Macapagal-Arroyo to make clean elections in 2010 the legacy of her "scandal-tainted reign in Malacañang." To ensure that the 2010 presidential election will be honest and fair, the senator said Mrs. Arroyo should choose wisely the new chair of the Commission on Elections and use her political will to carry out the long-delayed computerization of elections. He also said the President should put a stop to the cheating that tainted previous elections and appoint trustworthy persons to the vacant Comelec posts so that the poll body would regain the trust of the public.

All of these suggestions are well-taken, and if Mrs. Arroyo could carry them out before the 2010 elections, they could earn for her presidency a better public judgment. But to these suggestions we would like to add: Prosecute the Comelec officials found liable for the anomalous billion peso computerization deal. Up to now we cannot understand why the Office of the Ombudsman has yet to find former Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos liable for the failed P1.3-billion Mega Pacific contract for the computerization of elections. Only Commissioner Resurreccion Borra has been found liable. Why only Borra when all the commissioners, including the chair, signed the contract?

True the ombudsman is a constitutional officer and is supposed to be independent of the Office of the President, but Mr. Arroyo can always use the influence of her office to get the accountable people to answer for the scandalous deal that has caused the loss of more than P1 billion in taxpayers' money. The resolution of the case would send a message to Comelec officials and the public that no bushy-cushy will be tolerated in the agency charged with safeguarding the sanctity of the ballot.

The term of Abalos, who resigned as chair, ends on Feb. 2. If Mr. Arroyo indeed is resolute in clean up a short list of nominees for the post, although she is not required by any law to do so. But up to now she has not revealed the names on the short list, giving rise to speculations that the entire exercise is just a PR show. It is quite possible that a person who would protect the interests of the President and the party in power would be selected.

The President can stop all speculations simply by revealing the names on the short list submitted by the search committee. The people have the right to know who are being considered for this very important position. The people would not want another Leonardo B. Perez, whose primary qualification for the post was said to be his inability to count correctly. Neither do they want another Abalos, whose term was marked by many scandals and irregularities.

After Edu I, upright individuals were appointed Comelec chair, like Ramon H. Felipe Jr., Hilario G. Davide Jr., Haydee B. Yorac, Christian Monsod, Bernardo Pardo, Harriet O. Demetriou and Alfredo L. Benipayo. It was only by letting Chair Luzviminda G. Tangunan and Abalos whose terms were tainted by scandals and irregularities. The country is not lacking in lawyers who know their election law. We hope that the President will make the best choice for the good of the country.

We also hope that the President will select persons of unquestioned integrity as successors to Commissioners Resurreccion Borra and Florentino Tuason who are retiring soon. We do not want another Virgilio Garcillano (of "Hello, Garci" fame, or rather, notoriety) to occupy the post.

The process of computerizing the elections should start now instead of at the 11th hour. Some say that the Election Modernization Act of 1997 which provides for poll computerization needs to be amended. If that is so, then the President should make its amendment one of her priority proposals in the coming regular session of Congress. Two years should be enough time to finally modernize our clumsy system of tabulating and reporting election returns.

Mrs. Arroyo has said that she would step down at the end of her term in 2010. We hope this is not a promise similar to the one she made on Rizal Day in 2002. She can still make clean elections in 2010 the final legacy of what Senator Arroyo called her "scandal-tainted reign" before she steps down from the presidency. All it will take to accomplish this is an exercise of good judgment and political will.

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Tycoon for the people?

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

SHE ALMOST MADE SCRATTED THIS NEW University of the Philippines graduate who aspires to be a "tycoon for the people" a la John Gokongwei. So, what spurs "INT"? It don't have room to use her name. Sorry.)

"INT" (not "Pointer Points"). This Venezuela scholastic (U-TOP, ! compared the government's penny-pinching with how other countries invest in the future through their kids' schooling. For education, Malaysia allocates 8 percent of a GDP that's 3.8 larger than ours; we are under four than half; 3.1 percent. Thailand spends 4.2 percent. Congressional pork, in contrast, "imploded" along with Estrada's fifty-fifty scholarship for 400 beneficiaries.

Her former thesis guru, "Jeff" e-mailed. Still, "I felt like crying when I read the honest figures.... I felt compelled to comment because are repeatedly spoon feed Brazil Ang barbarous ang pag-uusi ng kapwa. Watch it the logic of the Mr. Bombastik."

She mentioned: "Any parents worked hard to have me finish graduated in high school in a private, all-girls school in Pasig. I was blessed to get into UP on Los Baños," guaranteeing with a Bachelor's degree here ever."

"As early as grade school, I knew what a privilege it was to have the education that I enjoyed. My middle-class parents never failed to remind me of this. So did teachers and tutors in school.

"And I've wanted to give back to my country from this gift. I suppose it's the life ethic (obsession) for a friend), that's build a foundation (that'd help people). I wanted to study, specifically in the public education system."

"Seven months after graduation, I am still not on my way to becoming what I dream about: a 'tycoon for the people.' Neither am I searching. I got into public relations because I help my parents pay the bills. I join those dreams at the back burner, at least this month.

"Other my job, but feel like I'm not doing any thing big for the country. Would I be finding so guilty if I hadn't done noble-benefactor-like?

"Then I forget the dreams you have, our teachers reminded us. That's my prayer for us: "Sir" or our Baguio high school students, must have birthed not solving ego in them so: not Joseph Estrada, under Marilo Lacson, Bandanado Sol, de Castro and their cronies now, we're saddled with a carabao-republicans who makes us to not Jose Rizal-ic. Solomon Lacson struggles to prosecute national inheritance from the Marcos dictatorship. Embedded in the administrative chain of succession, Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr. grumbles over meaningful cues for the anointed Arroyo presidency. Beyond that what? "Whether it fled the dominant plenty? Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

"Our 'leaders' don't just pillage the treasury," a Cebu Daily News editorial quipped. "They plunder the country of hope. Worse, they steal off the future to the young, in short a price tag for looting of the spirit."

Think you feel "this" way when changes?" we also seek. But there are thousands of well-offspring alienation like "Jeff" who, in day to day work, will seek out for those who feel once and unstable. Inventor Magsaysay Phillip Gonzalez? He who refused to allow illegal logs and drains on his ship. Or Oblate priest Anton Pernitello Bello who taught in dirt-poor Tawi-Tawi displays the dangers. Don't they give as much as, probably more than, tycoons?

Jeff's first for not having become "a tycoon for the people" is that he's not alone graduates are a student. Learn instead what my grandma can never fully grasped what El Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Romero wrote, just before his assassination in March 1980:

"We are disunited. We believe only a few frames of God's work. Nothing we do is complete. We simply plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water do everything. But this exalts us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete. But it is an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We are workers, not master builders, servants, leaders, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own."

* * *

E-mail: jaralbar.mercado@gmail.com

Postscript, ante-script

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

EDSA II AND PHILOSOPHIZING FROM THE START. I recall that many American publications lionized on it, in complete contrast to the way they lionized Estrada which was more in keeping with prime and authoritarian. Anthony Spaeth of Time magazine said Edsa II was nothing more than "mob rule." Sandra Burton, Mavis Aquino—and Edsa I's—restless distracter—said there was no difference between Edsa I and Edsa II. Even the Los Times stated it was just a resurgence of the other.

A great deal of that perception remains. On my last December, when I spoke at the London School of Economics before a group of Filipinos and foreigners on Philippine books, I sensed that many Filipinos still look at Edsa II as mere anarchy by impatient institutions rather than showing them up, or assisted by educating ordinary people to make their own voices count, or using power for solving public outrages for their ends. Edsa II, they said, invited like a cure to pain, the other launching all the popular forces in its real conscious move sympathetic to them.

Well, it begin with, the first Edsa might also be accused to be a consequence of the other, given the composition of the forces arrayed against Marcos, but including the cult. It is to some degree true Marcos, like Erap, tried to depict the fight against him as representing class conflict, with him, of course, representing the masses indeed, the first Edsa might be argued to be more elitist than the second in our fundamental respect, which is that it had the stamp of America on it. You can't have anything more than that, the Americans are saying the injunction took in this country's sacred cows to die.

I did say don't affix Edsa I, in response to the American opinion shots, that I suspected the reason they were unhappy about Edsa I is not that unlike Edsa I it was largely homegrown. It did not carry the storyline of Filipino exiles in the United States returning home to fight a tyrant and with the help of the US State Department and by democracy is affirmed, it is does not destroy the institutions of democracy, it matures them.

It's so easy in the case of elected leaders' power-grab attempts, though that is not always. Or so for countries like ours. In other countries like those of the West, the democratic institutions work in practice and not just in theory. On the United States, for example, is Hitler Rutherford Hayes' the decision to jail for dental technology. Where the institutions, correctly or reasonably, represent the general interest that's why it's called "representative democracy"), you assume direct electoral intervention in the political process or, is at your own peril. In countries like ours, the institutions are weak and often only on paper—conceived as prostitutes are purchased and political activists are shot or disable, the wire, the least basic democratic institutions of all, can be undone as well. Where the institutions are only on paper, you encourage them. The general impression we're encouraging is that the law being cared to justify and historic, lawlessness rather than justice, you assume direct external intervention acts as your own benefit.

This seems to pertain to the same pro-democracy forces that created it. In saying Erap's time and pull up a seemingly intelligent effort to oust a formidably elected president the fate as much rule. You saw what it was then and you'll see the impatient effort to oust him as existing this country. What it took "mob" for a democratic it was refer to a rebellious black mob committing a reprehensible action, or is it an effort to a mindful, or civil and cultivating, group like the Makati (the original "Mob") or a "Multiple Citizens" wielding unprecedentable rule. In this country, People Power doesn't just strengthen our democratic institutions, it's the only thing that unleash the left, secret initial powers, of those democratic institutions. Without People Power, or the threat thereof, those institutions might turn out to be there.

Question is, if we can't trust leaders who are themselves or have been tried the public trust, why can't we do that to someone who's loved?

'Celestial musician'

TRIBUTES POURED FOR FR. EDUARDO HONRADO, celebrated as the "Mother of Philippine Journalism," when he died on Jan. 13 at age 89. And this week in the Ateneo Quezon City campus. There were Grandpa to a dozen his 70 years of Jesuit existence, as well as over three decades of monumental rituals for the Lord. His co-workers may need no introduction to the Filipino people. Some from the nation has been pleasantly singing all these years as Mass, such as "Bienvenidos," "The Magnificat," "Misa Nuestra" and "Pagkat si Dios," President Macapagal-Arroyo regarded "the gift of his voice to the praising of a meeting figure whose recognition at installations or liturgical rituals has 'resonated spiritual resonances for our nation.'"

She awarded a trip to Honorable Fr. Honrado's memory a bridge so that she could attend the funeral Mass last Tuesday morning. Upon the recommendation of NCCA executive director Cecile Alvarez and Fr. James Reuter, S.J., the President posthumously awarded Father Honrado the Presidential Medal of Merit in recognition of "his legacy of liturgical music, which continues to bind Filipinos together in prayer and celebration of unity."

* * *

Everyone has stories about Father Honrado. Dr. Candelaria Arenillo, his close friend for 57 years, and Ateneo professor emeritus of Filipino, Department of Studies, was at his most eloquent when he paid tribute to his gift of laughter and the exuberance joy of his music. His gentleness and gentleness seemed to have been his constant companion. For many years of suffering from a stroke that left him gifted manipulation of notes and words virtually open-ideas. Arenillo narrated that amid the silence that followed the stroke, Honrado's sweet lil. John the Baptist, St. Joseph and Eddie Rodriguez. He recalled that in fleeting in the late 1990s, President Ferdinand Marcos had asked for him to be included in the Gregory Barrio's and Dulay and the songs were mostly those of Honrado. During Pope John Paul II's sojourn in Bryle Jarib, Iceland, he celebrated Mass and most of the songs were Honrado's own.

Candidate Cardinal Rosales likewise testified during his last years. Honrado nearly accepted his suggestion to use white music to make some songs about his devotion to Mary. "The beautiful Tagalog songs about Mary and the Filipino people. Imagine that the nation has been pleasantly singing all these years as Mass, such as 'Bienvenidos,' 'The Magnificat,' 'Misa Nuestra' and 'Pagkat si Dios,' President Macapagal-Arroyo regarded "the gift of his voice to the praising of a meeting figure whose recognition at installations or liturgical music

No pork, no work for legislators

FOR 12 THE STOCKIEST AT traction to run for Congress. Leg. slators have an insatiable craving for pork because that is what voters here there really. So pork, we work. So, if a candidate for Congress tells you he wants to serve the country, look at him in the eye and tell him to tell that to the Marines.

Legislators have developed this notion that pork is a municipal thing, to be dispensed in the guise of developing their constituencies. Before, they held the pork that they personally dispense. Now they hide their pork in the different budgets of the departments but still for their personal disposition.

Spending to develop constituencies and the national economy is the job of executives, national and local. Legislators participate in establishing development priorities for their constituencies through the barangay, municipal, provincial, and/or the regional development councils. These priorities are then raised to the national level for funding, as may be recommended by the National Economic and Development Authority.

Both for legislators not only excess the budget for national disbursements. Its disposition has nurtured as much corruption such that it has earned for our country the shameful label of being one of the most, if not the most corrupt, countries in the world.

It's about time that pork barrel funds allotted to legislators are consolidated with collectional funds

Pagcor, PCSO and other income-generating agencies, and programmed to infrastructure and livelihood projects, reduce the disparity between developed communities and depressed areas, and suppress the entrenchment of those especially involved in bringing the government closer to the people, such as the marginalized public school teachers and civil service workers and those in the police and military service whose uncondicional service goes beyond personal and corporate interests.

Without pork, the members of Congress would be better legislators and raising servants of the people.

—SALLY G. FERTENADO
V. ABUEVA ST.
fortenadosalut@yahoo.com

Needed by education sector: discipline and commitment

I WONDER WHY FILIPINOS ARE so engrossed with English proficiency when discipline and commitment is the number one requisite for government services and what the education system needs. Our students are poor in all major subjects like Math, Science and English. This is because we are using an English curriculum for a language that pupils can't understand.

What is wrong with using the vernacular in teaching, as long as the children understand their lessons? When teachers don't know how to teach ... that is what is wrong, not others.

Math and Science are more important than English. Developed countries like Japan don't make so much fuss of English. They are more worried about how to instill in their people the values of discipline and commitment so that they

get a good education, learn to work hard, improve the economy maintain peace, stop corruption and insure political stability and make government programs tell.

Here, looking at the way our education officials conduct themselves, would you trust them to raise the quality of education in our country?

—MANUEL MERCURIO,
mlrydm1611@yahoo.com

A WORKER cleans up Plaza Miranda in Quiapo, Manila after the Black Nazarene procession

Let religious celebrations be 'green occasions' too

THE HIPPY ARTISTE "BLACK Nazarene devotees leave behind tons of garbage in Quiapo" (Inquirer, 1/14/08), should remind all devotees, the Church and the entire nation of the impact of what we do on our environment.

While deeply moved by the people's resolute faith and devotion, we cannot help but be disturbed by the huge amount of mixed trash carelessly dumped on Plaza Miranda and the streets leading to the shrine of the Black Nazarene.

The busy streets of Quiapo were littered with plastic bags, bottles and drinking straws, Styrofoam containers and food wrappers, barbecue sticks and cigarette butts. Non-reusable food trays and "happy foam" beanies, which would later end up as trash and dumped in "secret" elsewhere, were all over the place—even on the streets, on banquettes and bridges, and on the façades of houses and buildings.

The unrestrained littering during the Quiapo fiesta devotions not only did dirty and desecrate the Black Nazarene who many fil-ipinos beseech for deliverance from all difficulties in life, including serious health problems that could actually stem from the toxic pollutants of our environment.

Twenty years ago, the Catholic bishops, in a pastoral letter on ecology, asked the Filipino people to recognize the urgency of caring and organizing for the environment to halt and heal the injuries and scars on our earth. Now, more than ever, we see the need for concerted action to stop our country from turning into a huge dump.

We hope that the next feast of the Black Nazarene and all other religious or historical events of our diocese and vibrant culture will be remembered into "green" occasions that will show our consciousness to Mother Earth and our shared responsibility to defend her from materialism, pollution and destruction.

—MSGR. C. GRANADO,
secretary, Eco-Waste Coalition,
ecowastecoalition@yahoo.com

Volte-face by a would-be president

I REMEMBER SEN. MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO emphatically saying, not too long ago, with regard to the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (Jpepa), that "no deal" is better than a "bad deal."

Her direction is supported to read that he has made an about face on the issue and is now pushing for the senate's ratification even though, by his own admission, "there is not much gain" to be had from the agreement. Why would anyone make deals with Japan, he says are more here one ourselves but we be left behind.

Because because of competition our sponsorship would probably have been the reason it not be the here than (1) the Jpepa is not identical to the other agreements made by Japan with other countries and (2) the Jpepa emanates from the Philippines significant concessions that are not reciprocated by Japan.

The senator, the supposed beneficiaries of the Jpepa, are even opposing it as they believe the ultra or matter of the agreement will denote Filipino professional earners to low wage earners, doing the same work as Japanese earners but receiving less pay.

And what does Roxas say now about the toxic waste provisions of the Jpepa? That they are there for us to make Japan see sharing, and not the other way around. Even assuming that the Japanese government has indeed agreed to make Japan our dump, I don't think it would be just barbaric, shameful for us to be close to the Japanese people.

I can just imagine the massive pressure that sen. probably brought to bear on Roxas by heavy-endorse an agreement he probably doesn't strongly believe in.

To tolerably accept an onerous international trade agreement because we feel we are powerless to amend it is defeatist strategy. This hardly speaks well of a young man aspiring to become president of the country. Leaders are supposed to lead, not accept things as they are.

—MERCI FERRER,
Braulio Cave Hideout Farm,
33 Mataliban St.,
Barangay Central, Quezon City

Why Gonzalez's media advisory should be ignored

THE JUSTICE SECRETARY'S "ADvisory" directing media people to obey the authorities during police military operations is tantamount to suppression of the press. I don't see why the media, in accordance with the industry, I would not heed the advisory for the following reasons:

1. It is illegal and unreasonable. To report to the people the truthful events which they have the right to know.

2. The justice department or secretary is not my boss.

3. My functions role as a journalist is not under the justice department.

4. Advocate lesser of my law that says "Media coverage of an impasse can never be a crime." And I don't think there is such a law.

5. The Constitution of the Philippines states "No laws shall be passed abridging the freedom of the press." I hope the justice secretary has not forgotten this.

6. Out of respect, media do not use ongoing military operations operations time to time to watch coup talks or maneuvers.

It would be better for the justice secretary to concentrate more on the investigation into why former Rep. Romeo Jalosjos was able to escape, but I the Bureau of Corrections under his department's jurisdiction?

Continued responsibility, secretary!

—JESUS RAEL RAMARES,
jesusjoseph@yahoo.com

A reason Vietnam is surging ahead

I HAD VERY LITTLE KNOWLEDGE of Vietnam when I became interested in it because of several articles comparing that country with ours. One of those articles was written by Fareed Zakaria, which used some figures to compare Vietnam to the Philippines and Indonesia. Another is a book by Bob Dietz, which stated that unlike the Philippines, which is also "A nation of war," Vietnam healed and rebuilt itself faster. Tan's column and Dietz's book noted Vietnam's fast development and its strategies for success. Tan's emphasis that Vietnam's foreign policy contributed significantly to its progress.

Part of the "Doi Moi" (the strategies in Vietnam's economic reforms) process is its gradual globalization and regionalization. It follows the guideline: "Vietnam wants to be a friend of all other countries in the international community of peace, independence and development."

Its foreign policy is simple not compatible with what it needs. It's what the Vietnamese people long for as a time when the country needs no more wars. Hence, it's resisting use ties with other countries while keeping its old friends. Its diplomatic strategy has been so effective that it has "befriended" 176 countries, including all the major powers. It now has trade relations with 165 countries, a fact that has helped its economy a lot. Moreover, this foreign policy has kept the country out of war, thus allowing it to achieve stability. With its stability to this, it has earned a spot in the international community.

Being "a friend to all other countries" does not just mean having bilateral agreements; it also means participating in international organizations and forums.

Finally, Vietnam's active participation in the United Nations paid off when 191 members of the general assembly voted to make it a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. This was the first time that Vietnam was chosen to be a member of one of the most powerful UN organs. Its term starts this January 2008.

I believe that Vietnam's foreign policy is effective not just because it promotes its national interest but also because it espouses peace and stability.

—SIA, BERTENE AGBAYANI,
bertene_agbayani@yahoo.com

True justice for all in the pursuit of development

FORGETFUL WHO HOW FORmer Supreme Court Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban dissected the links among loads of ideas related to culture, governance, economics, etc. that shape the quality of what he calls the "intangible wealth of nations." (Inquirer, 12/23/07)

Indeed natural wealth is no longer as significant a basis of wealth as it used to be, when empires of all civilizations waged wars and hoped other empires did. Though one might think that wars, then and now, are essentially meant to rob nations of their natural wealth, the provocative views of Panganiban prompt us to look beyond for many other reasons why nations go to war and some should decidedly while others have not.

As economic ideas evolved, we came to realize that many things were needed to fill people out of material want. Natural resources were not enough, physical capital was not enough, financial capital is not enough, human capital is not enough, etc., I was equally important. The Marshall Plan infused physical capital, and did wonders for the rehabilitation of Europe after World War II.

Still, natural resources and physical capital were not enough; state governorship was also important. The World Bank's International Finance Corporation came to life, scholarship grants and fellowships became "important tools," and graduate schools of management mushroomed here and there.

Economic thought kept evolving until World trade and price mechanisms needed to be fixed. "Transparency" did not only advocate free trade, it discouraged governments from taking active roles in the economic order of things. But in the late '90s, developments policies reconsidered the role of government in economic development, arguing that effective government facilitated economic growth.

Then, in early 2000, Malcolm Gaus, then chief economist of the World Bank, advocated a "Strategic Development" anchored on the promotion of investment climate and empowerment, which would "unleash the energies of millions of economic agents." The strategy was seen to create conditions for the promotion of more physical and human capital.

The latest strategy on empowerment claims development "financing" and "institutional" as the so-called community-driven development (CDD) projects, which are said to be effective in raising community capacities to collective action or, in a broader sense, social capital. CDD allows communities to have direct control over key project decisions. It has now become the fastest-growing investment in the lending development assistance. Thus, we have today's refreshed equation: physical and produced capital plus human and social capital equals the wealth of nations.

I like the idea that prayerlies in communities and that where there are natural/fair traits are also to be had and sustain the engine of economic growth. I also like the strategy that seeks to promote the great equalizer among peoples—empowerment, health and education.

But notice—as Panganiban suggests—no second in having a government that dispenses true justice for all, an economic system that ensures a fair reward for effort exists, and a political culture that encourages honesty and diligence. Only all kinds of success we will have in generating wealth. Empty (or intangible) can still be parasitic and so empowered, healthy and educated economy that produces more people (OFWs), and create more wealth for other nations than for ours.

—SHERMAINE BUSUS ARRIBA,
sabugonia@yahoo.com.ph

Metro Manila traffic experts need crash courses

IT IS HEARTBREAKING TO HEAR of such stories as that of elven Fidelsoro Jacosios, 1/14/08), especially when the tragedies are largely avoidable. I agree with Fidelsoro concrete barriers have no place on our roads.

In my journalia, they strike a row of vertical plastic tubes which collapse upon impact, thereby causing nothing more than minor scratches or shallow dents on wayward vehicles. We can improve on this basic concept by assessing places or situations

where we see motorists which we think are prone to crash, say sharp turns and planting them along the road instead of putting up those "death barriers."

Instead of constantly passing the blame on hapless motorists, MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando should take a long, hard look at his own, or outright inappropriate, use of his resource. His intelligence surely serves to reinforce his lack of understanding and expertise on matters such as traffic management. How ridiculous was it for the chair to use traffic police car other materials which are not designed to withstand such impact?

Instead of wasting time and resources on such publicity stunts, he should have used the time to study the problem and come up with solutions. Or, better yet, he could have just asked us, the motorists, for our suggestions.

Fernando and his MMDA bright boys should either take crash courses (you intended) on traffic engineering and management or step up their posts to those who know what needs to be done. Also, they should stop entertaining ideas about running for higher positions.

—GODOFREDO BALTAZ,
dodobaltazar@gmail.com

Australia's migrant experience

I READ WITH INTEREST RECENTLY AN ARTICLE IN A MAJOR national newspaper, written by a Filipino who had migrated to Australia. It was one of those pieces which diplomats rarely come across in the course of their duties, and which, if read by an ordinary layperson, factual yet also written from the heart. The article dealt with the overwhelming satisfaction of migrants in Australia about the decision they had made to start a new life "Down Under." Based on a recent survey conducted by the Australian government, the article revealed that 20 percent of respondents felt that the thing they liked most about Australia was its people. Weather, lifestyle and environment also rated highly. Generally, only 4 percent of respondents listed discrimination as one of the things they did not like about their jobs. Understandably 10 percent responded "missing the family back home" but 86 percent simply answered "nothing."

As the author alluded to, the survey findings dramatically showed why Australia is increasingly becoming a favored destination for prospective migrants. A separate survey, conducted in 2006 in 29 countries around the world, found that Australia was one of the top three most attractive destinations for migrants, along with the United States and Canada.

Some Filipinos whom I talk to mention the "discrimination" issue when the subject of migration to Australia comes to mind. As noted above, it's even near for the vast majority of those who have actually settled in Australia, but I guess it shows how misperceptions die hard. Yes, Australia did have a "White Australia Policy ... up until the early 1970s. Yes, like any countries, Australia had to deal with issues of race relations, including not only with migrants but also with the "first Australians," our indigenous people.

But as a nation we have come a long, long way since the days of the White Australia Policy. Today almost one in four of Australia's population of around 21 million was born overseas and almost half the number has at least one parent born overseas. Cantonese, Arabic, Vietnamese and Mandarin are in the top seven most commonly spoken languages. Australia applies a completely non-discriminatory immigration policy, taking close to 100,000 migrants per year. In fact, Filipinos represent the fourth largest non-European immigrant population to Australia, and have been very successful and adaptable to the Australian way of life.

The Australian government continues to look for Filipino migrants. In many ways, they encapsulate the ideal new Australian: hard-working, English-speaking, with a great sense of community but also able to compete well with other Australians, and highly skilled. This strategy is increasingly being heard here. Some 16,000 people applied for 3,000 places in a skilled migration forum we held in Manila in 2006. And we were also looking at renewing more contractual workers from the Philippines, an objective which is being helped by the relaxation of some visa requirements.

On Dec. 26, Australians from all races, religions and countries of origin will come together to celebrate Australia Day. Originally it was a day solely marking the arrival of European settlers in Australia. Today it unites those who trace their ancestry back to that day with the indigenous Australians and those who have come across the seas, albeit under different circumstances, to settle in our great country. If you are a Filipino who has a dream to live, to study, to work and to raise a family, no more and more Filipinos are realizing. And if inspiration is something you are contemplating, you could find no more attractive propositions.

Tony Hely is the Australian ambassador to the Philippines.

Diplomatic Pouch

Tony Hely

Dispatches from Philippine-based foreign missions

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the operations of airlines and airports by the Inquirer, you may write to Sandy Ashcraft, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Online Section Bureau, corner Yuipo and Mercedes Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to No. 897-8703; 897-8796; or e-mail readers@inquirer.com.ph

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Across the NATION

Priest killers hiding on islet, PNP says

By Charlie C. Señase
and Edwin D. Fernandez
Inquirer Mindanao

COTABATO CITY—GOVERNMENT forces have cordoned off a number of islet villages in Lanao del Sur province to hunt down the suspects in the killing of Fr. Jesus Reynaldo Roda and the seizure of two hostages last week, police said.

Roda, 53, a Catholic priest belonging to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate congregation, was shot and killed by 10 Abu Sayyaf terrorists who barged into the Notre Dame of Tabiawan on Jan. 15 in Tabiawan town in Tawi-Tawi.

Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao, police director for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, said a task force was formed to get the killers of Roda and had been scouring Lanao del Sur's municipalities for the past week in the hostages' hideouts.

The task force, made up of members of the Navy, Marines and Air Force, is "not there to operate with caution nor to isolate casualties to innocent civilians, particularly the two hostages," said Goltiao.

Omar Sarip, a high school teacher of the Notre Dame of Tabiawan, and Nonoh Gabriel, a fish vendor, have been taken as hostages to serve as the terrorists' "human shields" against pursuing lawmen, he said.

3 suspects

Goltiao said the military had already identified three suspects in Roda's murder as Hasan Sampaguita, an Abu Sayyaf sub-commander; Asman Jaha-asiran, and a certain Humphy.

He said he was verifying another military report that linked a former police officer to the killing. "The military has implanted in on his alleged involvement. I got his name, but we are still checking the veracity of his alleged link to the terror group," he said.

Roda had just finished supper with the school's staff, including William Romero, counselor and general manager of General Santos- and Palawan-based Project of World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines, and Tesap when the gunmen arrived, police said.

At 8:30 p.m., they barged into the chapel where the priest had gone for his regular evening prayer and brought him outside and on a basketball court. When Roda resisted, telling them that he would rather die than be kidnapped, he was insulted and shot in the head and body.

They tried to help

One of the beneficiaries of Roda's schoolwide program called Oblate priests at the radio here that the Jesuit and Tausug residents inside and near the parish compound tried to stop the armed men from taking the missionary priest.

But the terrorists ordered residents and parishioners to their guns or anyone who would come closer to him, according to the broadcaster, who did not want to be named for security reasons.

Romero said he was with Roda when the priest was told that gunmen had landed in Barangay Lihud in Tabiawan.

"When I asked him what he felt about the apparent threat, he told me that if and when he will be kidnapped, he'd rather be dead. And indeed he was true to his words," Romero said.

Well-loved priest

The priest had been helping the poor Muslim and Christian settlers in Tawi-Tawi through education and livelihood projects. He was the school director of Tabiawan for 10 years and had been training parishes in Central Mindanao before his missionary assignment in Tawi-Tawi.

A hero's welcome greeted the remains of Fr. Roda when he was brought to the OMI formation house here on Saturday.

Since then, a steady stream of visitors, both Muslims and Christians, flooded the OMI formation house compound, as tributes that Roda was well-loved, according to Fr. Max Bernabe, Oblate superior in the Philippines.

Bernabe said Roda's remains would be transferred to the Immaculate Conception Cathedral on Tuesday where a Mass will be celebrated the following day at 8 a.m. before the burial at the OMI seminary in Tamontaka, Cotabato City.

Bishop Angel Lagdameo will preside the requiem Mass.

Al Mijlinda at the remains of Fr. Reynaldo Roda at the Oblates of Mary Immaculate headquarters in Tamontaka, Datu Odin Sinsuat. Sharif Kabunsuan. Roda was killed on Jan. 15 in a hilltop attempt in Tawi-Tawi.

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NEWSBRIEFS

2 'police interns' rob bank

CEBU CITY—Two armed men posing as police interns robbed a rural bank in Lapu-Lapu City on Friday as the lead policemen were nearing the Sinulog festival, the city's yearly crowd draw.

Wielding pistols and wearing police uniforms, the two entered Mactan Rural Bank in Subo this, Basak, at 9:35 a.m. and took an undisclosed amount of cash.

They locked the cashier and the bank's guard inside the vault and fled on a motorcycle, police said.

Jhonner Papalinan, Inquirer Visayas

Landslide buries church, houses

DAUIN CITY—A church and two houses were buried by rain-triggered landslide in the mining village of Mt. Banata in Mindoro, Compostela Valley on Jan. 16, officials said.

No one was injured in the landslide that hit Purok 1A and Purok 1 B at 2:30 a.m., according to village chief Francisco Tito. He put property damage at over P500,000.

The village still, on unstable soil and the risk of landslides there is high, the Mines and Geosciences Bureau said, citing a hazard mapping survey last year. It recommended the evacuation of people in the landslide-prone areas.

Frinston Lim, Inquirer Mindanao

Soldiers find more guns after clash

CALAMBA CITY—Army soldiers have recovered more high-powered rifles from the site of a recent battle between government and New People's Army forces in Pila town in Laguna.

Three rebels were killed in the Jan. 12 clash in Barangay Mamlic in Pila. They were identified as Eddie Bravo, Jerry Monreal and Manuel Bulano.

Lt. Col. Francisco V. Delfin, head of the Army's 1st Infantry Battalion, said the soldiers found three high-powered firearms, four pistols and demolition materials.

Two M 16 rifles and assorted bullets and magazines were recovered in a house near the encounter site, Delfin said.

Nika Catherine Calleja, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Printing presses yield fake docus

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Members of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) raided two printing presses here on Thursday and seized counless documents such as birth certificates, transcript of records, diplomas and even mayor's permits.

Senior Insp. Jose Condes, CIDG chief here, told reporters that the raids on St. Paul Printing Press on Pendatun Avenue and Data Center Enterprise Solutions on Bonifacio Street were conducted following reports that they were engaged in printing fake school and government documents.

Condes said the establishments were selling the bogus school documents to job applicants.

Aquilino Z. Zonio, Inquirer Mindanao

Police tag 2 suspects in ambush

LUBUAN, Bulungan—Police have identified two of the four suspects in the killing of three brothers in Barangay Bacalhan on Thursday.

Senior Supt. David Santos Jr., provincial police chief, said the two—Rodolfo Fernandez and Pearsal Serrano, an uncle of the victim—would be charged with murder.

Brothers Mario, Roner and Lorenzo Serrano, of Barangay Apacay, East, Bulangas, were riding on a tricycle when four men on motorcycles fired them at around 6:30 p.m. The victims died on the spot.

"This is more of a bodyguards between relatives. It was a shooting incident not an ambush," Solares said. Police recovered slugs of a .45-cal. bullets from the crime scene.

Marlon Alexander Loleño, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Farmer dies in Catanduanes clash

VIRAC, Catanduanes—A farmer was killed and a soldier was wounded in an encounter on Thursday in Pandan town, 95 kilometers from this capital, police said.

Members of the Army's 3rd Scout Ranger Battalion were on patrol in Barangay Purok when they encountered an undetermined number of New People's Army rebels at 7:15 a.m., said Senior Supt. Francisco B. Peñaflor Jr., police provincial director.

Peñaflor identified the slain farmer as Pedro Fernandez, 58, of Sitio Cabuloan, Parol, and the wounded soldier was Private First Class Dionnerges

Ferdan Ebalan, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Luisita farmers remember victims of Mendiola rally

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Farm workers in Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac picketed the Central Luzon office of the Department of Agrarian Reform here on Monday, to remember the 13 farmers who were killed during a rally in Mendiola 21 years ago.

"Ten ang anghan na may gawa (Only one family was behind the massacre)," Lito Ilao, director of the United Luisita Workers' Union (Ulwu), said, referring to the Jan. 22, 1987 bloodbath in Mendiola and the seven striking workers who were shot dead in a riot that ensued with police and soldiers on Nov. 14, 2004 in Hacienda Luisita.

"Alam magbabaka sa Luisita nagsasalo. Sa mismong bahaging mga Cojuangco nangyari (The Mendiola massacre was no different from the Luisita massacre, both happened right where the Cojuangcos reside)," Ilao said.

It was during the term of then President Corazon Aquino, whose family owned the more than 6,000-hectare Luisita estate, when the Mendiola killings happened.

A survivor, Wilfredo de la Peña, did not join the picket at the DAR and preferred to spend the day farming in their village, Hinumpunan, in Tarlac City.

"He's still traumatized," said his nephew, Dave de la Peña, who is chair of the Ongoing Alyansang Makabayan Tarlac.

Wilfredo, Dave recalled from his uncle's account, "dashed for safety when bullets rained on them."

Minutes later, he said the policemen started picking up the farmers, dreaming them in a police station where they were called "Dares-related."

In the case of more than 5,000 members of Ulwu, Ilao said the unresolved agrarian dispute "continued to be a form of injustice by the Aenyas ad. misericordiam."

In December 2005, the DAR was enlisted by a presidential agrarian committee in distribute lands in Luisita and resolve the stock distribution option there. Presently Hacienda Luisita Central Luzon

Gunmen kill tribal chieftain

By Aquilino Zonio
Inquirer Mindanao

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—A TRIBAL chieftain and employee of the provincial office of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) was killed by two men on a motorcycle in Polomolok town in South Cotabato on Sunday.

Bendor "Bong" Dawang, NCIP provincial domain coordinator and former radio broadcaster, died from two bullet wounds in the head and belly at Howard Hubbard Memorial Hospital in Cannery village in Polomolok.

Two spent shells and a slug fired from a .45 cal. pistol were recovered from the crime scene.

Police said the killing could be related to Dawang's involvement in helping several tribes in the province get back their ancestral land. Relatives of the victim claimed that he had been receiving death threats for helping the tribes.

Several tribal clans have already filed land claims before the NCIP here over growing lands covered with pasture lease agreements that had expired or were about to expire soon.

The protégé the city council to pass a resolution on Thursday signifying its intention to get back the pasture lands with expired renewal contracts.

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Baguio flyover to open even without GMA, says DPWH

BAGUIO CITY—FOR PUBLIC works officials will no longer wait for President Macapagal-Arroyo to open the city's controversial flyover, whose construction she once cited to stop.

The flyover "will open to all types of vehicles 24 days after Tuesday [Jan. 24]," which is Jan. 28, according to Public Works Undersecretary Jimmy Aquino. It needed "further testing" now two weeks, he said.

Mr. Arroyo's schedule was no longer "an issue," Aquino said the bureau was thinking when he supervised a "final inspection" of the flyover together with the quality assessment team of the Department of Public Works and Highways.

"This is the stage of government procedures when state engineers assess whether the contractor has done its job properly, he said.

"[The] flyover is passable, that is true; but only to light vehicles. [DPWH Cordillera engineers and the contractor] would have wanted it open to small vehicles but we did not want to be selective about it—so, we will wait for 14 days [from Tuesday] and then it will open [even to buses]," Aquino said.

Officials of the DPWH Cordillera backed the completion of the 19.79 million flyover after years of delay, but they would not order its opening, saying they preferred to have Mr. Arroyo—to be the first motorist to drive through the 270-meter span.

The Office of the President, however, had not included the flyover's ceremonial opening in Mr. Arroyo's itinerary for January and February.

Mr. Arroyo earlier ordered the transfer of funds meant for the flyover, in the light of objections raised by two former mayors. The flyover was programmed using only the P61 million savings from the modernization of Session Road.

But in 2006, Mr. Arroyo told reporters that the way provided opening to motorists "is dangerous because it would entail legal wrangling to realign funds obtained through a loan. Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

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Complete great-tasting meals at an affordable price, Jollibee 39ers provide delicious inspiration for those busy work or school days. The Jollibee 39ers Meals are available Mondays to Fridays.

Work safety issues beset Korean firm even before blast

By Tonyet Ocejo
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—WORK SAFETY issues had besmirched Hanjin Heavy Industries and Construction Co. Ltd. even before the Jan. 18 explosion at its shipyard in Subic, Zambales, that killed two workers and injured three others. One is still missing.

A preliminary report released by the Mataas-pasaw para sa Kaligtasan ng Bayan (Malakabayan) cited "poor implementation of safety rules and regulations."

For one, it said that Hanjin does not issue safety permits to subcontractors before these are allowed to build a part of a ship.

Hanjin general manager Hyoung Jong Yi, named in the report as "safety workplace."

Marino Geraldino, president of the Subic Shipyard Workers Union and Shipbuilders and Construction Workers Association, said "there's a missed use for the work area. In the blast incident, the workers on the upper level were doing pile-grinding while those on the lower level were applying oil near the propeller and the aerophone [tanks]."

That information came from co-workers of the victims, said Geraldino, who is also chair of the Makabayan in Olongapo City and Subic.

Workers' accounts

The Malakabayan report, which gathered the accounts of two fourmen of subcontractors and workers in dangers were pre-welding, power-washing, hull outfitting and major assembly departments, and—telephones were given a general orientation of the shipyard.

"No drydock orientation is given in case of fire," the report said.

There is also "no systematic drydock fired rail, specifically alarm system, exit map and lights," it said. Housekeeping is poor, to noted, adding that hoses and cables were "entangled."

According to the report, Hanjin has not hired company doctors although Philippine labor laws require firms to assign one for every 200 workers.

Hanjin started doing business in 2006 in Subic town's Redondo Bay on area within the jurisdiction of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA). It has invested $1.6 billion, making it the country's single biggest foreign direct investment that year.

Only 3 nurses

"Hanjin has 8,000 workers now and it has only one paramedic there nurses," the report said. While there are nurses, they do not deal with burn and lacerations "even if there are assured by the hot temperature in the workplace."

"Nurses address only wounds...eye relief, oil problems and sprains," it said.

Malakabayan said workers had requested having two sprays and fire extinguisher to cover accidents and deaths. In those cases, they can only get benefits from the state-owned Social Security System, it said.

SBMA Administrator Armand Arreza said "there are safety concerns that are constant to work with Hanjin in addressing," saying he will study the recommendations. But said a report will be released in time.

"So we already indicated to our preliminary incident report to the SBMA, the area was inspected by a safety team and nothing unsafe factors [were] found or deserved prior to the commencement of work," Arreza said in an interview.

"On the report that no safety officer was around while the work was going on, I want you to consider the size of the shipyard, number of working places inside the ship that is being built," he said.

Arreza said that the yard are developing individual safety officer to every working place. Instead, prior inspection is to be done especially when the working place is deemed a hazardous area."

Pressing said: "Assuring the hazardous materials were in existence in the area of incident, it should have been found and cleared by our safety team. Moreover, those who signed that there was hazardous materials should have immediately reported that to the safety team, leader or supervisor."

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₱5.6-B Bacolod Silay airport opened in rites

By Carla P Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

SILAY CITY—THE P5.6-BILLION NEW BACOLOD-Silay airport will bring growth opportunities to Negros, Vice President Noli de Castro said on Friday.

De Castro led the inauguration of the airport facility here, which was also attended by Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza and Japanese and Negrense officials.

The 72-year-old Bacolod airport was closed down Thursday night after the last flight out.

"The endless opportunities that this new and modern airport could bring to Silay City and to Negros Island does not mean that today's gain is Bacolod's loss," De Castro said.

The world-class airport will allow both cities to move on, he said. "Now, Bacolod can concentrate on its competitive edge in commerce, business and the service sector."

"Being a highly urbanized city, Bacolod has a great potential to develop central business districts and commercial mini-service areas," De Castro said.

He cited the experience of Iloilo City when Megaworld purchased the old airport site for development into residential and commercial areas.

The government plans to extend the new airport's 2,086-meter runway by 500 meters to accommodate larger aircraft from the United States and Europe, De Castro said. But Mendoza said the present runway could already accommodate a 300-seat Airbus A330.

De Castro said Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella, chair of the House committee on transportation, had informed him that work on a 30-kilometer road that would connect the Bacolod circumferential road to the new airport would begin this year and would reduce travel time to 15 minutes.

Media seek SC protection

From page A1

the country.

It was the first case brought against the Arroyo administration by one of the 101 journalists who were handcuffed and detained for allegedly refusing to heed warnings to leave the Peninsula. During the police operation, an armored personnel carrier and vital gas were used to dislodge rebel soldiers.

Named respondents were Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon, PNP Director Geary Barias and Chief Supt. Asher Cadiles.

The petition urged the high court to stop the PNP from charging and prosecuting the ABS-CBN staff members in connection with the Peninsula incident.

It also called on the high tribunal to prevent the respondents from "effecting, and making threats of, future warrantless arrests and acts of harassment of petitioners and other journalists, in the course or in consequence of the performance of their work, such as in the coverage of breaking news similar to the Manila Peninsula standoff."

The petitioners said their "constitutional rights to liberty and security were violated when they were illegally arrested" at the end of the seven-hour standoff" against renegade soldiers led by former Navy Lt. Antonio Trillanes IV, who is now a senator.

'Very real threats'

"But worse, their continue to be very real threats that such rights will again soon be disregarded and infringed upon. Sec has that some of the most powerful officials in government have asserted that petitioners, and other journalists, may even be illegally arrested, harassed, and prosecuted for such past, and future, coverage of news breaking events," the petitioners added.

They said that the threats referred to Razon's warning that journalists who would attempt to fight for their rights in court would face counter-charges, and Reyes's declaration that members of the press would be arrested to facilitate coup.

She also pointed to Gonzalez's issuance of a media advisory on Jan. 11 warning news organizations that their reporters could face criminal charges "if they deactivated an duty from authorities during emergencies."

Urgent and compelling

"These developments have far-reaching consequences because they not only have stifled reporting on a conflict situation now but to worry that he or she may be arrested and treated like a criminal just for doing a job," Dalocanal said.

Maria Ressa, counsel of the petitioners, said the ABS-CBN reporters and staff—including Menjes Gobati, Melanie Rhoevanne Reyes Ambil, R. Mark Cabreros, Estelito Mac, Norbert Llaquinet, Alexis Acosta, Bernie Lim, Mudhat Mandy Villar and Brad Alonso—believed in the Supreme Court's long history of vigilance.

"We ran to the Supreme Court with urgent and compelling reasons," Ressa said.

"We did not do this just because some government officials have been insinuating that a lady reporter had helped Capt. Nicanor Faeldon escape during the siege," the lawyer said.

ABS-CBN reporter Cee Orosa-Ortiga shows the petition for a writ of amparo that 101 journalists filed before the Supreme Court on Monday. INQUIRER PHOTO

Ordoñez said the instances alluded to all female journalists present during the event. (See related story on this page.)

"My assessment is clear. The very three government officials have been portraying journalists as an attack on our credibility," Ordoñez said.

The ABS-CBN petition said there was no ground for the warrantless arrest because the journalists had not attempted to commit, or committed, an offense in the presence of the arresting officers.

Burning issue

The journalists therein were not informed of the "cause of the arrest" or advised of their "Miranda rights" when they were taken into custody. No subsequent charges were also filed against them, they said.

Breaking in the petition, Gonzalez said the MIS-CBN staffers were trying to prevent being charged."

MEMBERS of media show their plastic handcuffs as they are led to a police bus after the standoff at the Manila Peninsula in Makati City on Nov. 29, 2007. RAMON MUÑOZ

Razon: It's not Ellen, it's not Ces

By Nikko Dizon

ELLEN ANG-CES, YOU KNOW it's not you.

Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon Jr. yesterday reminded why reporter journalists Ellen Tordesillas and Ces Drilon were roaming in his maintenance that a female reporter helped Marine Capt. Nicanor Faeldon escape from Peninsula Manila hotel last Nov. 29.

"I haven't categorically said it was Ellen. Which I am saying is, Ellen Tordesillas baeno noon to erase because she knows from the bottom of her heart that it is not her," Razon said in Filipino in a press conference at the PNP headquarters in Camp Crame.

Razon issued the same message to Drilon, an ABS-CBN anchor/reporter, whom told that she was also protecting the real culprit in the siege.

On Friday Tordesillas denied to an Inquirer story that she had helped Faeldon escape from the Peninsula, which has Antonio Trillanes IV, Navy Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, and 100 soldiers had locked up as they resented their call on President Macapagal-Arroyo to resign.

The standoff lasted seven hours, and Trillanes, a former Navy lieutenant, and the rebellious rebel officers surrendered.

Razon begged for the second time not to charge Drilon.

"They do not want anymore is to be charged even if they committed something wrong. They just go to the Supreme Court for a writ of amparo. They will file a petition above. But I'm happy this thing has been filed. Let's find out what the Supreme Court will say," Gonzalez said.

Razon also welcomed the clarification.

"Actually, we've wanted the media to file a case against the PNP since the beginning so that we can resolve the hearing in one court where due freedom of speech, freedom of the press and where the police responsibility of preserving peace and order and preserving life and limb is there," Razon said.

With reports from Gaila B. Aldaroveria and Wilma Dizon

OFWs taught how to counter strong peso

From page B1

Smart Communications to put up small Internet café businesses across the Philippines.

The opinions that the DBP presented ranged from buying dollars to avoid the government's favorable exchange rate conversion three or six months down the road to opening small businesses.

Hedging

Foreign exchange hedging refers to how a person or business can acquire protection against currency fluctuations, which can spell boom or bust for groups like OFWs and exporters.

Reflecting their upcoming anxiety over the dwindling peso-conversion of their earnings, the OFWs broke into applause when DBP president Reynaldo David said that among the hedging products that the bank was offering was a peso-dollar cheque (PDC) insurance product whose fee won't be collected until the end of the contract.

The minimum amount that someone can invest in any of DBP's hedging products is $5,000, which can be invested for one month, three months or six months at the client's desired exchange rate, according to David.

If, for instance, a client wants to fix his remittances at an exchange rate of 40:$1 in six months, he enters into an insurance protection contract with DBP. If after six months, the peso appreciates to 38, the client will still get the rate of 1940 to the dollar when he counts his earnings.

But if, let's say after six months, the rate is 45, then they don't need to call it in and they can sell to the market. So, they have an upside," David said.

In a nutshell, the insurance gives the OFWs the right but not the obligation to sell the dollars to DBP for a fee.

"Many say it's difficult to pay for an insurance so we thought that the fee should be paid at the end of the contract so you'll be prepared all the way," the DBP president said at the OnCheckout.

To illustrate this product, Theresa Quintos, DBP head of treasury, said a $5,000 contract for a one-month protection, based on last Friday's market rates and the peso-dollar closing rate of 40.07, a premium pegged at 41 would cost 1.06 percent of the contract or about P410.22.

"It's like your medical insurance where you pay a premium every month but then if you fall sick or you have emergency money and if not, at least you're healthy. But you pay a fee," Quintos said.

Forward contract

The second hedging option is a forward contract, or an agreement to buy or sell a specific amount of currency at a future date. There are many variations of this product, including non-deliverable forwards (NDFs) in which there is no actual delivery of currency and only the differential is set (but upon maturity).

"This (NDF) was the enemy of Asian currencies a long time ago because they became a speculation instrument. There's no delivery so it simply says that it also becomes a form of hedge as if you bet it's gonna be 39 and it becomes 37, I will pay you. If I bet it becomes 41, you pay me 1%," David said.

But unlike the large Forex exchanges where hedgers are matched with speculators, DBP does not intend to make money from the scheme by providing cover to OFWs.

"Everyone is after the remittance. The way we look at it is we're not in the business to get at OFW and also Landbank," David said.

In the case of DBP he said the bank would retain the program—meant as a service to OFWs—by making money in other businesses.

Starting a new business

"The solution is not just in giving [exchange rate] protection. The solution is to provide long livelihood," David said at a separate briefing in Hong Kong based OFilipino reporters.

Acknowledging that hedging could only do so much, he said a more sustainable solution would be to help OFW families put up small businesses back home to augment their incomes instead of just waiting for the monthly remittances.

Aside from the 150 pesos per pregnant, DBP is working closely with big Philippine companies to find opportunities in outsourcing, according to David. This does not mean putting up call centers but linking area arms of the insecure business functions of corporations like trucking.

Absolute trucking

For instance, DBP had worked closely with the Absolute group, which is, among others, in the transportation business.

"We spoke with them. Why don't you lighten up your balance sheet and give up your delivery trucks and sell them to OFWs and we will lease them directly instead of us holding to you (to buy those trucks)," David said.

"We will lend to them as low as zero percent [for] their lease (service) contracts with you," the DBP president said.

"It's like contract farming. It gives them peace of mind[ing]. It gives them business. It makes them entrepreneur, which makes sense because at the end of the day, they are the heroes," David said.

Bustle cry: hedge and invest

The Hong Kong road show is just the first of the initiatives lined up by the government in support to new battle cry for OFWs—hedge and invest.

About 4,000 flocked to the Sunday hosting Manu Sandoval was here now OFWs, even Pidlisan Bravo, based on church testimonies. Most of them could not enter the jampacked church.

DBP organizers also limited entry to the OFW road show to the usually packed hall, which was filled to its 3,000-capacity.

Dubai road show

Another road show, this time jointly organized by the DBP and Landbank, is scheduled for this week of the summit in Dubai with President Macapagal-Arroyo launching the first tranche of OFW bonds.

The first tranche of OFW bonds will be in the form of high-yielding, deposit linked instrument issued by Landbank. This instrument is in the form of peso-denominated long-term negotiable certificates of deposits (LTNCD), which carry a series of zero five years and enjoy tax exemption.

Unlike regular time deposits, LTNCDs are slapped five (by central bank) with much lower reserve requirements, thus enabling issuing banks to offer higher yields. But a major difference is that investors are required to hold the security until maturity, unlike time deposits in which pre-termination is allowed.

High yields

Because the instruments are long-term, the holder can use them as collateral when borrowing or sell them on the secondary market.

In the strong peso regime where there are winners and losers, it is best to focus on ways to soften the blow on the negative impact on OFWs without moving against market forces, according to Finance Secretary Margarito Teves.

He said that even the government could not predict or control the international forces driving the exchange rate.

"It's determined not only by domestic factors but also by external and geopolitical factors that are largely outside of our control," Teves said.

The peso was today's best performing currency last year, gaining by nearly 18 percent against the US dollar. It is expected to remain strong this year but appreciate at a more modest rate compared with its gains in 2007.

4 lucky bettors hit ₱133-M lotto jackpot

From page B1

of numbers is hot on, the hour apparently used the numbers more frequently to their birthdays, anniversaries and signs to win fame, that's Superlotto 6/49 jackpot of P133,220,658.80, an official of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) said.

The anonymous winners in Quezon City, Cavite and who wrote their quickly claimed their winnings share of the pot—P33,305,139.70—bringing along with them practically an entire boutique of well-wishers from Diliman U of Quezon City, PCSO officials said.

The winning numbers were 4-8-11-15-23-26.

"What is significant," PCSO spokesperson Dr. Larry Cedro told the Inquirer, "is them very were did not use the lucky pick but used their own standard picks out of numbers that they've maintained."

Lucky picks are random numbers chosen by the betting machine based on the frequency by which they are drawn in the different lotto games, Cedro said.

Overflow crowd

Cedro said that the winning combination consisted of numbers that were within the cubes, dit and that it would be safe to assume that the winners actually had taken their numbers from birthdays, ages, anniversaries and other dates significant to them.

Cedro said that the winning couple and their "owners" filled up the holding room of the PCSO, where winners are asked to wait while their checks are processed.

They were so many some of them had to be told to wait outside the building.

The PCSO is bound by an agreement with the winners not to provide details that could identify them.

Secrecy agreement

"We have to maintain their anonymity and, in turn, the winners sign an agreement where they vow to stay anonymous," Cedro said, explaining that this was for their own security.

None of the other three winners—one from District II of Quezon City another from Manila, and another from Dasmariñas City in Mindanao—have come forward to ask how they could claim their share of the P133.4-million pot.

Not in a hurry

The pot had accumulated from 14 draws and included a held value of the prize money before the ticket price increase for the 6/49 game was implemented.

As a matter of practice, majority of the winners wait until one or two weeks before making queries about the process before claiming their prizes, Cedro said.

Cedro said that in the case of last year's lone winner of the P126.8-million pot for the Superlotto, the lucky bettor from Bataan, Tagalog, claimed his prize after a month.

"We initially made queries on how to claim his prize, one or two weeks after the first 14 draws. He actually claimed his prize on the last working day of December last year, which fell on Dec. 27," said Cedro.

Total sales: P116M

The increase in the price of a Superlotto ticket—from P50 to P55—has apparently failed to dampen the enthusiasm of Filipino bettors. Tickets sales on Sunday alone for the 6/49 game draw totalled P116.4 million, unofficially.

"We have not yet received the total sales of the draw from Dec. 31 since we implemented the price increase," Cedro said.

He said bettors had reached enthusiastically to the increase in the pot as a result of the price increase.

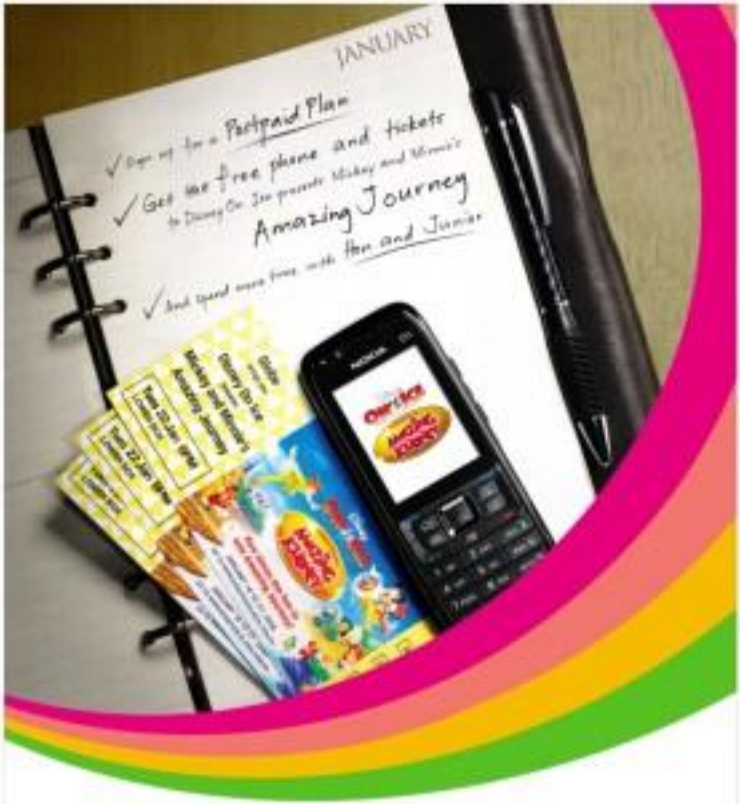
"More people are responding," he said.

The increase in the price of the 6/49 draw ushered in the 6D digit draw an option that bettors can pre-set their lucky numbers. This prompted Malacañang to seek an explanation from the PCSO.

The PCSO pointed out that the price increase was purely a corporate decision and that the Palace had been duly informed of the move before its implementation.

NEWS

RP in focus at 'Hot Shots' film fest in Berlin



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NOKIA

Globe

By Cynthia P Balana

THE PHILIPPINES IS THE COUNtry in focus at the 1st Asian Hot Shots—Festival for Films and Video Art which runs from Jan. 16 to 22 in Berlin, Germany, the Department of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

Citing a report from Philippine Ambassador to Germany Delia Domingo-Albert, the DFA said the festival opened with the European premiere of the Filipino film "Serbis" directed by Quark Henares. Some 500 guests attended the event.

At least 42 Philippine short and feature films will be shown throughout the festival, which aims to enhance friendship and understanding between filmmakers from the Asia-Pacific region and their counterparts and audiences in Germany.

Albert said the festival chose the Philippines as focus country this year in order to highlight the resurgence of Philippine cinema as reflected in Filipino filmmakers using digital technology.

The festival brings together young Asian filmmakers and their works that will serve as "a catalyst in enhancing friendship and understanding between and among the artists and their counterparts and with their German and international audience in Berlin."

Still in the lead

Citing the comments of the organizers, Albert said the Philippines' seventy-odd cinema industry, which began at the onset of the 20th century, was still taking the lead in Southeast Asian filmmaking.

On Friday, Goethe Institute Manila launched the book titled "Rizal Goes Philippine-German Cinema Relations" edited by Tilman Baumgärtel that chronicles the beginnings of the export-inward and oblivion film movement of the 1990s in the Philippines, which paralleled developments in contemporary German cinema.

During the premiere, a panel of experts in Philippine and German cinema discussed Philippine-German cinema collaboration, namely, Nick Deocampo (director, filmmaker, Film Institute, Manila), Rolfal Tolentino (filmmaker, Philippines), Richard Kimmel (director, Goethe Institute Manila), Ingo Petzke (professor for film and video at Fachhochschule Wittenberg), Christoph Janocko (filmmaker, festival...Regine Heilbronn (Hochschulrektor) Berlin, and Tilman Baumgärtel (editor of Rizal Goes to Germany of the Philippines).

Deocampo runs a parallel at the Seminar for Southeast Asian Studies at Humboldt University Berlin on the theme "Queer Cinema in Southeast Asia" which was led by the Human Rights and Sexual Identity section of Amnesty International on Jan. 17.

Faeldon ringing up officers — AFP

MARINE CAPT. NICANOR FAELDON, THE fugitive Magdalo rebel leader, has been recruiting military officers for another attempt at overthrowing the Arroyo administration, a ranking military officer said yesterday.

Maj. Gen. Fernando Mina, chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' National Capital Region Command (NCRCom), said he received reports Faeldon had been calling up military officers since last week.

"It's about the recruitment that they are doing," Mina told reporters.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said last week that the recruitment of members of the military was going on for another bid to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo, even as he assured the public the AFP was ready to thwart any disturbance attempts.

Mina said he was not certain exactly how many military officers Faeldon had contacted but "there were a few" who reported the calls to their superiors.

Asked if Faeldon identified himself in the phone calls, Mina replied: "He at least, as long...nagpakakilala siya. (He was identified by his voice.)" Nikko Dizon

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Editor Boots G. Chavez

MWSS gets OK to take over BF water supply

Parañaque homeowners hope approval will end decades-old problem

By Cynthia D. Balana and Julie M. Aurelio

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO yesterday gave the go-signal for the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System to take over the distribution of water in BF Homes Subdivision in Parañaque City, a move expected to benefit thousands of households.

De Castro, chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, based his approval on the recommendation of the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board which is under his supervision.

In its decision dated Jan. 11, the board noted that the subdivision owner and developer had failed to provide residents in the area with adequate water supply and ordered them to turn over the responsibility to the MWSS.

Parañaque City Mayor Florencio Bernabe said he would soon meet with MWSS officials for the takeover of the subdivision's water supply system.

"The work is not yet done. Now we have to sit down as soon as possible with MWSS officials and Mayor Bernabe to discuss the modalities of the takeover," he said.

Last year, BF Homes residents led by the Homeowners Welfare Advocacy Group wrote to President

SHAY

FERNANDO

Bayani Fernando on presidential race: I'm ready

By DJ Yap

TANTALIZED BY THE POSSIBILITY OF AN electoral showdown with one of his fiercest critics, Bayani Fernando said yesterday he would stand taller than Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay come 2010.

"I can stand taller than Mayor Binay. You have to stand tall if you want to be president," the chair of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority said in what seemed to be a dig at the opposition leader.

Fernando clarified moments later that he did not mean his words, literally. "I am talking figuratively," he said.

"I'm going to be the best president," he told reporters preventing adding he was already scoring his Lakas party mates to support his bid to become the administration standard bearer.

Unlike Binay, who has expressed interest in running for president but has avoided making any announcements, Fernando is not shy about making his ambitions known.

Frequent run-ins

Fernando has had frequent run-ins with Binay, who also once served as MMDA chairman under former President Joseph Estrada, in managing traffic and other matters in the financial capital.

For instance, the City of Makati does not recognize some of the MMDA's traffic policies, such as the lifting of the unified color coding scheme reduction program on certain days or under certain weather conditions.

This has prompted some observers to describe Binay's city as the "Republic of Makati."

At the press conference yesterday, Fernando listed his advantages over Binay, president of the United Opposition, and other prospective presidential candidates.

"In terms of political will and governance, I have exhibited my capability," he said. "I think my background is best suited for the post. My qualifications are better than anyone."

Binay's camp said it was reserving comment for the meantime. "It's too premature, so let us not take that away from him," said Joey Salgado, Makati's public affairs chief.

DID YOU KNOW

TODAY, Jan. 23, is the birth anniversary of the late National Artist for Theater Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero. He wrote his first one-act play titled "Ito Ba Ang Sinasabi Nila Sa Iyo?" (Is This What They Call a Laughter)" in grade school and went on to write and direct more than 100 plays.

In 1947, he was appointed assistant professor of drama at the University of the Philippines despite his having an college degree. He served the university for 26 years.

Guerrero was director of the UP Drama Club for 16 years, mentoring actors like Lou Veloso, Ishmael Bernal and Behn Cervantes who would all later become renowned directors.

In 1973, the president of Polytechnic University of the Philippines conferred him the honorary degree of Doctor of Humanities.

He was named National Artist in 1997, two years after he passed away.

Cyril L. Bonalaste, Inquirer Research

Soft drink 'empties' seized by NBI in 3 warehouses

By Allison W. Lopez

TEN TRUCKLOADS OF EMPTY soft drink bottles worth around P1 million were seized by the National Bureau of Investigation from three warehouses in Caloocan and Valenzuela city and Bulacan province yesterday.

Agents of the NBI Intelligence Special Operations Division seized 95,000 bottles of RC Cola and Zero-Free Soda whose sizes ranged from 1.5 liters to 250 milliliters, from the warehouses owned by Gina Gonzales, Ramon Ong and Ramon Ong Jr.

The NBI identified the owners of the first two establishments as Ramon, Virgilio and Lito Evangelista. The Caloocan warehouse is owned by Raul del Quiroz Gonzales. The three establishments are exclusive distributors of Coca-Cola products, the bureau added.

Raul Lansin, NBI Deputy Director for Intelligence Service, said they conducted the raid after Antonio Bobadoonan Gaap, owner of RC Soft Drinks, complained that their trade mark was being misused.

But this was denied by Coca-Cola public affairs director Jill Rayton who told the bureau that their dealers were probably selling the "empties" to empty soft drink bottles to RC Cola dealers, and it was not their policy to hoard empty bottles of their competitors.

"We organize all our business partners to act in accordance with the law," Coca-Cola said.

"It's a practice of the industry to hoard empties. What they should look at is whether or not the bottles are being broken because of the water supplies here," Rayton said.

NBI DOO executive officer Irene Garcia, however, said that the existing bottles mean huge losses for Antonio because there are empties.

"They are having a hard time refilling because their bottles are bought from another country since they have no plant here," he explained.

Bobadoonan Gaap of Antonio, he added, received the decreasing number of bottles reasoned so there was fewer agent to serve where the bottle were collected.

Republic of the Philippines
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NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following company/corporation/firm has filed with this Regional Office application for Alien Employment Permit/s

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If you have any information/opinion to the above mentioned application please communicate with the Regional Director.

RAYMUNDO S. ADRIANO
OIC, Regional Director

Is Malacañang abetting illegal logging?

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

THE PROBLEM OF ILLEGAL logging is caused by among other things, the indiscriminate cutting down of trees in the world's forests.

The problem has become so serious, it is now the topic of conversation among world leaders.

But here at home, the indiscriminate cutting down of trees through illegal logging goes on, and those involved apparently do not give a hoot about the effect of their action on the environment.

Sadly, the government seems not to care either.

In a Quezon del Norte town, a local official, reportedly in cahoots with the local official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), is involved in massive illegal logging.

So widespread and rampant is illegal logging in that mountain town, attending to my concerns in Davao del Norte, that in a few years the barren cover in the area will become bald.

The town is considered the province's "last frontier" because it's still thick with forest.

Why do the town executive and the local DENR officer continue to engage in illegal logging in the mountain town with impunity?

Because, according to my sources, the DENR official allegedly enjoys the protection of a former Cabinet member who still has strong Palace connections.

If this is true, then, Malacañang is tolerating illegal logging in that Davao del Norte town.

* * *

The next Commissioner on Elections chair will decide the future of this country because of his importance in keeping the 2001 elections honest and transparent.

President Arroyo, this columnist was told, promised to appoint retired Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo, her adviser, as the next poll body head.

Melo is well-known for having personally written the official report on extra-judicial killings of journalists and suspected leftists.

The Melo Commission cleared the President of any liability in the killings of media personnel and activists.

Depending on how you evaluate the integrity of the Melo Report, that's what you expect from Melo for the next presidential election should he be appointed Comelec chief.

What does this portend for our country?

* * *

It is said that Sen. Rodolfo Aquino, the seemingly chief of police of San Jose City is not so spotless as his subordinates. Aquino has been at his post for four years when regulations call for only two years in an assignment.

When Aquino calls on the police radio, some subordinates at the other end reportedly have to answer on the run at him.

The cops don't make this or their chief hide their identity by mimicking other people's voices.

My sources in the San Jose police say Aquino would instead ably get irritated and challenge his subordinates to again duel.

And the reply would be: "Sige, sir, game! sino ninyo ako? (Okay sir, but first you have to identify me.)"

My sources say the disrespect toward Aquino is a result of his not sharing "blessings" with his men.

Aquino's predecessors reportedly shared the bounty with the men.

Dumbbutty really breeds contempt.

Student dead, 4 hurt in QC road accidents

By Marlon Ramos

A 17-YEAR-OLD STUDENT died while four persons were injured in three separate vehicular accidents that took place yesterday in Quezon City.

Police identified Alejandro Mercurio Jr., a resident of 241 San Rafael Street, Barangay Old Balara, Quezon City. He was driving a motorcycle when he crashed into a passenger jeepney on Commonwealth Avenue. Alcantara later died of severe head and body injuries.

The second incident occurred a few minutes after midnight yesterday on Roman Highway, Barangay Daniel Aliba behind the wheel, crashed into a police patrol car driven by PO2 George Daniel near the Quezon Memorial Circle.

SPO2 Marcelo Salinda, traffic investigator, said Aliba's car hit the concrete guide before it smashed into a tree.

He said Aliba and his companion, Amy Bello, were slightly injured in the crash. Daniel and another policeman who was not identified, were uncubbed.

Aliba told investigators that the brake system of his car malfunctioned, causing him to lose control of the steering wheel.

More than an hour later, a wayward car driven by Glenn Dalos hit a taxi cab on Timog Avenue in Barangay South Triangle. The two vehicles then hit two other cars and a parked tricycle.

Dalos and his unidentified companion suffered minor injuries. The driver of the cab, Renaud Martinez, was not hurt.

Drivers may be fined for not using urinals

By Jeannette I. Andrade

DRIVING OF PUBLIC UTILITY vehicles in Quezon City may soon face stiff penalties for urinating in public.

An ordinance proposed by Councilors Diana de Guzman and Jaime Bautista aims to discourage drivers of taxis, FX vans, buses and jeepneys from urinating in public, despite the numerous urinals installed by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority to encourage them to use the facilities instead.

"This shows that drivers still disregard moral decency and such act manifests gross irresponsibility not only as a human being but as Filipinos citizens," the councilors said.

"It is now the right time to instill self-discipline to upgrade the standing of Filipinos in the eyes of the world in terms of human decency and encourage citizens to practice proper decorum while in public and in the presence of foreign tourists visiting around Metro Manila," they added.

Under the proposed ordinance, violators will be fined P5,000 and asked to render seven days of community service.

Once the ordinance is passed, the Office of the Mayor, through the Environment Protection and Waste Management Department, in coordination with the Department of Public Order and Safety, will be responsible for its implementation.

Armed men flee after shootout with cops

By Marlon Ramos

THREE SUSPECTED ROBBERS of a robbery syndicate figured in a shootout with operatives of the Quezon City Police District in Barangay Mariana, Quezon City yesterday.

Supt. Bernabe Balba, chief of the District Intelligence Unit of the QCPD, said they believed one of the gunmen was wounded during the clash.

"The three passenger van of the armed men's car had bloodstains. There's a big possibility the gunman was hit and rushed to a hospital by his companions," Balba said in an interview with the police.

According to the police official, three policemen on board a mobile car were on patrol duty when they noticed a Toyota Corolla (TBW 780) parked on E. Rodriguez Avenue at around 4 a.m.

When they tried to check the car, one of its occupants allegedly pulled out a gun and fired at them, triggering a shootout.

"Even the drivers of the gunmen were surprised when it suddenly why he drove the car in reverse," Balba said.

Motorists and other passersby who saw the incident told reporters the 15-minute gunfight was like a scene from a movie.

"Para silang nagbabaril sa pelikula yung nangyari. Bumaba'd yung mga lalake dahang ginamitan ng pistolang yung kotse nila (It was like they were shooting a scene in a movie. The suspects were firing while their car was moving in reverse)," a cigarette vendor told the bayanan.

The armed men then alighted from the car and abandoned it on the corner of 10th Street and Doña Rosenda Avenue.

They commandeered a green Mitsubishi Pajero (NBV 718) and sped off, Balba said.

The vehicle was later found at the corner of N. Domingo and Lourdes Streets in San Juan City.

Balba said the armed men could be members of the Ilihapon gang, which victimizes passengers and representatives of companies who transport deposit or withdraw large amounts of money from banks on Mondays.

MWSS gets OK to take over . . . From page A-17

Macapagal-Arroyo. They asked the President for help, saying the lack of water in the area has been a decades-long problem and yet the subdivision developer had refused to turn over the water distribution system to the MWSS.

Dr. Garcia, who was tasked by Ms Arroyo to work on the case, asked the homeowners to file a petition invoking Presidential Decree 1595 which empowers the MWSS to take over water systems in residential subdivisions if the developer or owner has been remiss in its duty to provide households with possible, affordable and sufficient water as required by law.

"Your main move will be brought to the Homeowners Association of the condition of the existing water pipes in the subdivision," said Rodolfo Lacson, the mayor's spokesperson.

Lacuesta said the city government would first inspect the existing pipes in the subdivision as most of them have not been used for years and may have rusted or sprung leaks.

"Before we could conduct an inspection, a formal notice to the developer would have to be issued first," he added.

METROBRIEFS

Man stabbed dead inside QC cemetery

A MAN died while his older brother was seriously wounded after they were allegedly attacked by their gambling buddies inside a cemetery in Quezon City on Sunday night, police said yesterday.

Eduardo Banaghanas, 32, died on the spot from deep stab wounds in the chest, while Eduardo Jr. is in critical condition at the Quezon City General Hospital. PO2 Hermie Cruz, investigator of the Quezon City Police District Station 5, said they arrested Danilo Bonifacio, 41, who was identified by witnesses as one among those who attacked the Banaghanas. Bonifacio, in turn, named his cohorts as Danny Fernando, Reynaldo Cancillar and Emil Salas. Operatives of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit of the QCPD have launched a manhunt for the suspects. In his report to the CIDU, Cruz said the Banaghanas brothers were on their way home from the Bagbag Cemetery on Intertoe Road, Barangay Bagbag at 11:30 p.m. Sunday when the suspects attacked them. He said the suspects took turns punching and stabbing the victims. Cruz added that before the incident happened, the victims were spotted playing cards with the suspects in the cemetery.

Marlon Ramos

Police informant killed

POLICE are looking for the suspect in the death of a 28-year-old man who served as an informant in the Pasig City police. SPO2 Rodolfo Salamanca said Mariano Villanueva Jr., a resident of Barangay Rosario, Pasig City, was killed by an unidentified gunman on Sunday night. Police said Villanueva was walking on C. Raymundo Avenue corner Bernal Street in Pasig City when he was shot to death by the unknown assailant at around 8 p.m. Bystanders rushed Villanueva to the Pasig City General Hospital but he died during treatment. A police official said the victim had provided information to the police on the illegal drug trade in Pasig City.

Andrei Alve

Over 100,000 back Pope in row with scientists

"BLACK POPE"—Father Adolfo Nicolás from Spain was elected Jan. 19, the worldwide Jesuit new Superior General, also known as the "the black pope," the 29th successor of the founder of the order of St. Ignatius Loyola. AFP

VATICAN CITY—MORE THAN 100,000 people filled St. Peter's Square on Sunday in a show of support for Pope Benedict XVI after protests by scientists forced him to cancel a university speech.

The pilgrims gave a roar of approval when Pope Benedict, speaking after his weekly blessing, said: "I encourage all of you, dear academics, to always be respectful of the opinions of others, and to seek out the truth and the good with a serene and responsible mind."

The 80-year-old head of the Roman Catholic Church cancelled a planned speech at Rome's La Sapienza university Thursday after dozens of professors and students protested his presence at the secular school.

"I went especially to salute university people, professors and all of you who have come today in such large numbers to St. Peter's Square to ... express your solidarity," the Pope said.

It is rare unscripted exhortation at the end of the appearance from his apartment overlooking the iconic square, the Pope said: "Let us go forward in this spirit of fraternity and love for freedom and truth, and common commitment for a brotherly and humane society."

The final burst of applause from the pilgrims, including La Sapienza students, lasted some three minutes.

A Vatican spokesperson put at 200,000 the number of pilgrims at the event—billed in the Italian media as "pope-day"—building up intense media speculation such as "Holy Father Mr. Iron Wolf" and "Long Live Freedom of Thought."

Tens of thousands more supporters watched video links of the event outside the Milan cathedral and in Verona, Italian media reported.

The cancellation of the Pope's speech drew criticism from across the political spectrum in Italy.

Deputy Prime Minister Francesco Rutelli attended Sunday's rally, as well as former Justice Ministers Clemente Mastella, who resigned just last week to force an explosive changes.

University Minister Silvio Meyer entered a dissenting voice, saying the politicians' presence at the event "smacked of exploitation."

Prime Minister Romano Prodi called last Sunday on Italy to "bring a definitive end to this tension" and not allow the Sapienza affair to become "an open wound."

The protest at La Sapienza, one of Italy's largest and oldest universities, was spearheaded by Marcello Cini, a professor emeritus of physics, who said that to have the Pope preside over the start of a new academic year would be an "intolerable violation" of the school's autonomy.

Sixty-seven professors and researchers of the university's physics department, as well as radical students, joined in the call for the Pope to stay away.

The incident "was a shock for most Italians, whatever their opinions on other subjects," said Marco Politi, a Vatican expert at the Italian daily La Repubblica. "In Italy to attack the Pope's person ... is to violate a taboo," Politi told AFP.

Dar Paolo Flores D'Arcais, who teaches at a prestigious philosophy magazine, Micromega, said: "This is the world upside down. That Pope ... is used to criticism. But that the university decided not to go to the university, whose he could have spoken."

Students opposed to the Pope's visit ranged "his anti-clergy work" during which they showed a film on Galileo, the 17th-century physicist who fell foul of Church doctrine by insisting that the Earth orbits the Sun.

Galileo was convicted of heresy by the Inquisition—the predecessor of the Vatican's doctrinal watchdog, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, that the Pope formerly headed as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

The conclusion of the speech at La Sapienza, which has a student body of some 130,000, was the first in Benedict's diary since he became Pope in April 2005.

Benedict's predecessor John Paul II was loudly heckled when he spoke at La Sapienza in 1991. AFP

Another possible culprit for thinning ice

HERE IS ANOTHER FACTOR that might be contributing to the thinning of some of the Antarctic's glaciers: Volcanoes.

In an article published Sunday on the website of the journal Nature Geoscience, Hugh D.J. Corr and David G. Vaughan of the British Antarctic Survey report the identification of a layer of volcanic ash and glass shards frozen within an ice sheet in West Antarctica.

For Antarctica, "this is the first time we have seen a volcanic layer small in the ice sheet punch a hole through the ice sheet," Vaughan said.

Heat from a volcano would melt ice melting ice and consequently the thinning and speeding up of the West Ice sheet. Which glaciers nearby, but Vaughan doubted that it could be affecting other glaciers in the continent, which have also thinned in recent years. Most glaciologists, including Vaughan, say that warmer ocean water is the primary cause.

Volcanically, Antarctica is a fairly quiet place. But sometime around 320 B.C., the researchers said, a hidden and still-active volcano erupted, spattering several hundred yards of ice above it. Ash and shards from the volcano carried through the air and settled onto the surrounding landscape. That layer is now out of sight, hidden beneath the snows that fell over the subsequent 23 centuries.

Although out of sight, the layer showed up clearly in airborne radar surveys conducted over the region in 2004 and 2005 by scientists and British scientists. The reflected radio waves, over an elliptical area about 110 miles wide, were so strong that earlier radar surveys had mistakenly identified it as bedrock. Newer radar technologies now can detect a second echo from the actual bedrock farther down.

The thickness of ice above the ash layer provided an estimate of the date of the eruption: 307 B.C., give or take 240 years. Scientists know that no eruptions occurred around 320 B.C., plus or minus a few years, but did not know where the eruption occurred. "We're fairly confident this is the same eruption," Vaughan said. New York Times News Service

Gaza plunged into darkness after Israel lockdown

GAZA CITY—GAZA fell in darkness early Monday after its only power plant shut down for lack of fuel as Israel kept up a blockade of the Hamas-run territory to retaliation for rocket fire, despite warnings of a humanitarian crisis.

The closure of the plant, which accounts for 30 percent of the population's needs, plunged entire city blocks in Gaza City into darkness, and was set to sharply worsen power cuts already hitting the impoverished coastal strip.

"We have had to close the power plant for want of fuel," in director Rafiq Mkha told reporters, warning of "very serious consequences for residents, but also for the operation of hospitals and water treatment plants."

Mkha said he had no word on when Israel might allow in the fuel to enable the power station to resume generating electricity.

The Gaza Strip, where most of the 1.5 million residents depend on aid, remained sealed off for a third consecutive day Sunday as the Israeli Cabinet decided to maintain the closure of crossing points amid escalating violence.

The Gaza director of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees called on Israel to reopen the crossings and appealed to the international community to help the civilian population.

PALESTINIANS attend a candlelight march against severe fuel cuts that led to power cuts, in Gaza City, Jan. 19. AP

The power station's shutdown has "plunged Gaza City, which has 800,000 people, into darkness," John Ging told a news conference, adding that director of emergency affairs every aspect of the civilian population's lives have to Gaza."

"If you visit any of the hospitals you will find that its generators are only producing enough electricity to keep essential equipment going. They are very cold, all of the wards, adding to the misery of the patients," Ging said.

In the darkened streets of Gaza City, hundreds of people held a candlelit vigil chanting: "No, no to the siege."

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak ordered the crossings into Gaza closed late on Thursday, saying the move was aimed at preserving militants inside to stop firing rockets and mortars into Israel and that it would be reassessed.

On Sunday, Barak told the Cabinet that the army was "weakening daily life in Gaza."

"We are targeting the terror elements and we are trying to show the international community that we are exhausting all possible options before Israel decides on a broad (military) operation," a senior government official quoted him as saying.

The Islamist Hamas movement, which has controlled Gaza since seizing power after a week of deadly clashes last June, said the Israeli measures amounted to a "death sentence" for the territory and called for international intervention.

"Closing the crossings into the Gaza Strip and stopping fuel shipments, alongside the continuation of the criminal killings, represents a death sentence and a slow death for the Palestinian people," Hamas spokesperson Sami Abu Zuhri told AFP.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, whose forces Hamas ousted in Gaza, joined the calls for an end to the Israeli blockade.

Abbas "called on the Israeli government to lift its blockade of Gaza immediately and allow the entry of fuel to facilitate the lives of the innocent and enable the proper functioning of hospitals which are facing a crisis that is putting lives of patients at grave jeopardy," Nabil Abu Rudeina said.

The power cuts come amid peak winter demand and with Gaza already reeling from a previous package of restrictions Israel imposed after the Hamas takeover.

"This is a very fragile system that is suffering from severe months of closure and every additional blow is reverberating throughout hospitals, water wells and homes in Gaza," said Basil Saabi, who heads the Israeli human rights watchdog B'TSELEM. AFP

Clinton, Obama court blacks ahead of S. Carolina primary

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA—Hillary Clinton will pay homage to Martin Luther King on Monday in a bid to woo African-American voters ahead of this week's Democratic primary in South Carolina, where her top rival, Barack Obama, enjoys strong support in the black community.

The New York senator will take part in a church service and a march on the public holiday marking King's birthday, before clashing with Obama in a televised debate.

Stationed by another rival in her White House quest, Hillary Clinton is making a major play for African-American voters, a vital Democratic power-block before clashing with Obama in a televised debate.

Set to embrace the mantle of a civil rights leader, Clinton will join Martin Luther King's widow Coretta Scott King on Monday in a bid to woo African-American voters ahead of this week's Democratic primary in South Carolina, where her top rival, Barack Obama, enjoys strong support in the black community.

THE REV. Martin Luther King Jr., in undated photo. AP

The New York senator will take part in a church service and a march on the public holiday marking King's birthday, before clashing with Obama in a televised debate.

Stationed by another rival in her White House quest, Hillary Clinton is making a major play for African-American voters, a vital Democratic power-block before clashing with Obama in a televised debate.

"Yes, Obama, the senator is a chance to appeal to African Americans in the state and nearly two dozen others which vote on the closely-concerned Democratic race in a blitz of contests on "super-duper Tuesday" Feb. 5.

For Obama, who triumphed in the opening nominating clash in Iowa, but fell to Clinton in New Hampshire and Saturday's Nevada caucuses, South Carolina is shaping up as a must-win encounter.

It is also his first chance to benefit from a large turnout of African Americans, in a unique position as the first black candidate with a realistic hope of the presidency.

Both Clinton and Obama attempted to symbolically frame the week of campaigning in South Carolina Sunday among African American worshippers.

In New York, Clinton accepted the endorsement of Reverend Calvin Butts, pastor of New York state's oldest African American Baptist Church. AFP

Foreign Legionnaire is last French survivor of WWI

PARIS—AT 110 YEARS old, an Italian-born Foreign Legionnaire who oversees nothing to do with the state funeral proposed by Former President Jacques Chirac in the last man standing in France from World War I.

"The first man to fall in the trenches deserves to be here, and as much as the last," Lazare Ponticelli said, according to his daughter Jacqueline Bredauchezon, upon learning of fellow veteran Louis de Cazenove's death on Sunday.

The national mourning he de Cazenove, two months Ponticelli's eldest and the second-last French veteran of the Great War, is clearly heartbreaking.

Now the pressure on Ponticelli's family to allow his solitary symbolic significance when the inevitable happens may yet become overwhelming.

Grandson Jean acknowledged as much when she said she wouldn't insist calls for a state session, "although we would impose some restrictions."

"This is a very fragile system that is suffering from severe months of closure and every additional blow is reverberating throughout hospitals, water wells and homes in Gaza," said Basil Saabi, who heads the Israeli human rights watchdog B'TSELEM. AFP

AN UNIDENTIFIED Saudi dancer in Riyadh. Some Saudi women are frustrated with the kingdom's judicial system—one has set off an international debate on Islamic law involving judges bans forced abortions and a first many-say ignore women's interests. AP

Saudi couple divorced in absentia remain apart

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA—TWO YEARS ago, a lawsuit on Britain and Morocco divorced them shattered the life they had built together.

It was the police, delivering news that a judge had annulled their marriage in absentia after some of Hanan's relatives sought the divorce on grounds she had married without his consent.

That was just the beginning of an ordeal for a couple who—under Saudi Arabia's strict segregation rules—can no longer live together. They used to review the ruling, publicized their story and sought help from a Saudi human rights group.

But the two remain apart and Hanan is considering suicide, she said, if her recent appeal to King Abdullah doesn't reunite her with the man she still considers her husband.

"Only the king can resolve my case," Fatima told The Associated Press by telephone in a rare interview. "I want to return to my husband, but if that is not possible, I want to know so I can just put an end to my life."

Fatima's case underscores shortcomings in the kingdom's Islamic legal system—in which rules of evidence are murky, lawyers are not always present and sentences often depend on the whims of judges.

Fatima and Hanan disagreed—and recently, many high-profile cases are women, who already suffer severe restrictions on daily life in Saudi Arabia. They cannot drive, appear before a judge without a male representative, or travel abroad without a male guardian's permission.

Recently, the king did intervene and pardon another high-profile case—a rape victim who was sentenced to lashes and jail time for being in a car with a man who was not her relative.

The two cases have brought Saudi human rights once again into the international spotlight—revealing not only the weakness of the kingdom's justice system, but the same rights Saudi women have here.

"When I heard that the rape victim was pardoned, I couldn't believe it. My case is so much simpler than hers, since my divorce is invalid," Fatima said.

Fatima said her husband, a hospital administrator, followed Saudi tradition in asking her father for permission to marry her in 2003.

"My brother reported good things about him, so my dad accepted his proposal," said Fatima, a computer specialist who was 29 when she married.

She said her father knew that Mansour came from a less prominent tribe than hers, but state he didn't mind because he "cared about the man himself."

The WORLD

John Lawrence B. Quiao

Al-Qaida on run in Iraq, say experts

Jihadists said to be forced to rely more on suicide bombers, choosy about targets

BAGHDAD—AL-QAIDA IN IRAQ IS ON THE RUN, forcing its elusive Egyptian-born leader to be more selective about targets and to rely increasingly on suicide bombers, US military intelligence experts said Sunday.

The jihadist network's current Iraq chief, Abu Ayoub al-Masri is less reckless and more selective about his targets than Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the experts told Western reporters in a background briefing.

The Egyptian, who took over when Zarqawi was killed in June 2006, is not to be underestimated, warned the experts, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"Zarqawi at one very ruthless and did a lot of massive indiscriminate killing," said one. "Masri is more tempered ... and has to be more selective about his targets.

"But he is powerful ... and very elusive. Very few people have contact with him ... but he pretty much runs the show here."

The experts declined to speculate on how many al-Qaida fighters are operating in Iraq but believed the number to be less than the 20,000 that US commanders gave a year ago.

The leadership of the jihadist network inside Iraq is dominated by foreigners although most rank-and-file fighters are Iraqis.

The significant growth in the past year of "freelancing" anti-Qaeda forces combined with increased capabilities of the Iraqi and US militaries had impacted on al-Qaida's ability to plan operations, they said.

"It's tough to plan an operation when you're on the run," said one. "They have less mobility, less access to caches and are executing more and more to suicide attacks as their ability to stage bombings is eroded.

"They can't get the freedom of space and movement to muster those sorts of larger operations," he said, adding that instead the extremists were targeting members and leaders of freelancing groups.

US military spokesperson Rear Adm. Gregory Smith reiterated what a news conference that operations by Iraqi and US forces in 2007 had sent some 2,400 al-Qaida fighters killed and 8,000 captured.

"Of those, we captured or killed 52 emirs, 32 improvised explosive device (bomb) leaders, 24 cell leaders and 91 facilitators," said Smith.

The Iraqi branch of Osama bin Laden's jihadist group had managed last year to launch 4,548 attacks which killed 3,976 civilians and injured nearly 18,000.

Violence peaked in March and April before beginning a gradual downward trend in mid-spring.

"Their sense of control and influence were diminished. We have reduced their lost health networks, disrupted the flow of foreign terrorists, weapons and improved weapons, and kept constant pressure on al-Qaida, forcing their leadership to be on the run," Smith said.

The trend was continuing in 2008, he added. AFP

Aging work force: US short of skilled workers

By Joanne Morrison

TRAFFORD, PA.—CINDY HELP the machines are running at precision parts maker Hamill Manufacturing, nestled in the Allegheny Mountains just east of Pittsburgh, near the booming center of the US steel industry.

But the factory's overcapacity is the result of a shortage of machinists—it has more orders than it can fill, despite a relentless 55-seconds—her become of a shortage of skilled workers.

"I'd hire 10 machinists right now if I could," said John Dalrymple, president of the company which makes high-end parts for military helicopters and various aerospace companies. "There's 8 to 10 percent of our work here."

While millions of jobs making everything from textiles to steel have moved to new powerhouses like China in recent years, precision work is likely to remain a crucial niche in the United States, one that is overworked and chronically underskilled.

And, in a bad sign for the United States and its declining economic might, the shortage of skilled workers is likely to get worse as baby boomers retire—with no younger generation of manufacturing workers to take the baton.

"Our work force is an aging work force," said Chief Executive Jeff Kelly, whose father founded the company 60 years ago.

"There isn't support of people lining up to come into the industry."

Some 29 percent of small to medium-sized manufacturers—those with up to 2,500 workers—don't have a succession plan, according to a survey by the National Association of Manufacturers. The survey was carried out in 2007 but has not been published yet.

A separate study in 2005, the latest available, said 90 percent of manufacturers are suffering a moderate to severe shortage of qualified workers.

"The irony is we pay very well, we have good benefits, we have job security and most of the companies that have survived the manufacturing downsizing at the early part of this decade until find enough skilled workers," Kelly said.

A typical manufacturing job pays about $60,000 a year, according to manufacturing industry figures, a premium of about 25 percent to the service industries.

At Hamill, a general machinist will start at $15 an hour, rising to $34.50 an hour after training, and going up to the mid to high twenties for senior machinists, who can earn nearly $70,000 a year.

But that is not enough to attract younger workers into manufacturing, a sector that has suffered a bad rap—not the least with layoffs in staffs famous companies such as the big three US automakers.

"Too few young people consider manufacturing careers and often are unaware of the skills needed in an automated environment," the US labor department's former in a study on the issue.

Edward Lazear, the chair of President George W. Bush's Council of Economic Advisers, warns that as more and more baby boomers retire the skills shortage will eventually cut to the country's economic growth. Reuters

"MIRACLE" MUD
People covered with mud sit in a traditional mud pond at the "Lagoon of Miracles" in Chiba on Jan. 20. The "Lagoon of Miracles" with its distinct greenish color along with the mudponds that are found in, is said to cure everything from acne to rheumatism.

5 indicted over worst S. Korea spill

SEOUL—SOUTH KOREAN prosecutors said Monday they have charged five people, including the captain of a Hong Kong-registered tanker, following the nation's worst oil spill last month.

Scores of marine farms and miles of beaches along the Yellow Sea coast were fouled when a drifting barge smashed into the 147,000-ton-billet Sparck on Dec. 7, hitting it in three places and spilling 10,900 tons of crude.

Three people have contested suicide following delays by local officials in paying compensation.

The barge owned by Samsung Heavy Industries was towing Heavy Industries Co. when it collided with the tanker in rough seas.

The skippers of the barge and of one of the tugs were arrested and charged with negligence and violating anti-pollution laws, the prosecutors' office in Taean County said.

The second tugboat captain was not arrested but indicted on similar charges.

The tanker carried by Hebei Shipping, a Hong Kong corporation, was anchored at the time. Its captain and mate were indicted but not detained for failing to follow safety orders from navigators and facilities, the prosecutors said.

Samsung Heavy Industries and Hebei Shipping were also indicted on charges of violating anti-pollution laws.

Under an agreement with South Korea's maritime ministry on Jan. 8, the tanker's owner Shield will pay up to 11 billion won ($12.5 million) toward the cost of cleaning up the shoreline.

Shield has said in a statement that payments would be made by Feb. 4. The tanker has been impounded until clearup costs are paid.

Residents in Taean County, the west coast area worst hit by the slick, have staged protests demanding quick and full compensation.

The central government sent about 60 billion won from state coffers and private donations to the region. But regional and business have been at odds as how to divide the money.

Lee Ono-hee, governor of South Chungcheong province, said the funds will be delivered to the residents over the next three to four days. AFP

Pregnancy problems linked to caffeine

TOO MUCH CAFFEINE DURING pregnancy may increase the risk of miscarriage, a new study says, and the authors suggest that pregnant women may want to reduce their intake or cut it out entirely.

Many characteristics already alert the women to limit caffeine, though the subject has long been contentious, with conflicting studies, fuzzy data and various recommendations given over the years.

The new study, being published Monday in the Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, finds that pregnant women who consume 300 milligrams or more of caffeine a day—the amount in 32 ounces of coffee or 25 ounces of tea—may double their risk of miscarriage.

Pregnant women should try to give up caffeine for at least the first three or four months, said the lead author of the study, Dr. Dr. Wang Li, a reproductive and perinatal epidemiologist at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Division of Research in Oakland, Calif.

"If, for whatever reason, they really can't do it, think of cutting down rather than quitting cold turkey," Li said. "Stopping caffeine really could have some bad effects."

Professional groups like the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Society for Reproductive Medicine have not taken official positions on caffeine, spokesmen said.

On Friday, the March of Dimes website said most experts agreed that the amount of caffeine found in 8 to 16 ounces of coffee a day was safe. Now, having reviewed the new study, the March of Dimes has changed its position to say that women who are pregnant or trying to conceive to limit their daily caffeine intake to 200 milligrams or less, said Jamie Bernstein, its senior vice president of education and health promotion.

"Women do need good guidance," she said.

Li's study included 1,063 pregnant women who were interviewed once about their caffeine intake.

Dr. Carolyn Westhoff, a professor of obstetrics and gynecology and epidemiology at Columbia University Medical Center, had reservations about the study, noting that miscarriage is difficult to study or explain. Westhoff said that miscarriages can have many chromosomal abnormalities, and there was no evidence that caffeine could cause those problems.

New York Times News Service

Brown calls for radical world reforms to reflect rise of Asia

BROWN

NEW DELHI—BRITISH PRIME Minister Gordon Brown called Monday for the radical reform of world institutions to help meet the new challenges of the 21st century, in particular the rise of India and China.

On a ten-day visit to New Delhi, Brown said business leaders the changes described as inspired by the post-war "visionaries" who set up the United Nations and other bodies like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

But he said the "new world order" should be more representative of what he called "the biggest shift in the balance of economic power in the world in two centuries"—the Asian economic boom.

"Only with international institutions that promote cooperation out of shared interest and predictability and accountability can large members of states consistently work together for the benefit of all," he said.

"But to succeed now, the post-war rules of the game and the post-war international institutions—fit for the Cold War and a world of just 50 states—must be radically reformed to fit our world of globalization; 200 states, and emerging single market places, unprecedented individual autonomy and the increasing power of informal networks."

He added: "We can and must do more to make our global institutions more representative. I support changes to the IMF, World Bank and the U.N that reflect the rise of India and Asia."

The keynote speech was billed by his office as an outline of one of Brown's main foreign policy priorities, and an attempt to secure Indian backing for his plan due to its growing clout on the world stage.

Britain already supports moves to make India a permanent member of the UN Security Council—a reflection of its status as an emerging economic powerhouse increasingly courted by world leaders.

"The task ahead is to agree for our time the rules that can make globalization a force for hope and progress for people," Brown said.

"I believe that only in this way can globalization become what it should be: a force for justice on a global scale."

Brown arrived in India from China on Sunday. Both countries are among the world's fastest growing economies and the many European countries, Britain is keen to court them to boost bilateral trade and other links.

According to Britain's Foreign Office, relations between the two countries are at their healthiest ever. Brown inducted Sunday that Britain...the former colonial power here until 1947—was no longer the dominant partner.

Instead he said the relationship was now "a partnership of equals" striving for common goals. AFP

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SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy B. Philmiralres Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ochoa

'Big day for Filipinos'

(LEFT) Rosales (right) and partner Dorothy Delasin do the jig (above) and hug each other as they celebrate the Philippines' amazing victory in the Womens' World Cup of Golf at the Gary Player Country Club in Sun City, South Africa, Sunday. AFP

ProGear Golf
Big Big Valentine Sale!!!

Veterans Rosales, Delasin no strangers to winning

By Inquirer Sports

THEY HAD SIX VICTORIES BETWEEN THEM, SO THEY KNEW how to win.

Dorothy Delasin and Jennifer Rosales emphasized the fact Sunday as the two LPGA regulars defied all odds and rewarded the Philippines with an unprecedented world championship in golf.

Hooking their talents to shoot even-par 144 on scales par-72 in the final round, the former Philippine team partners, who turned pro at the same time in 2000, won the fourth edition of the Women's World Cup of Golf by two strokes at the Gary Player Country Club course in Sun City in South Africa.

The homegrown Rosales birdied four times, two on each nine, and the 10-km Delasin matched that by closing her round with four straight birdies as they turned back South Korea's Shin Ji-yai and Ji Eun-hee, who shot a 67.

Delasin, the 2000 LPGA Rookie of the Year who owns four victories as a pro, said the breakthrough win was a "big day for the Filipinos around the world" because "we've never won the World Cup, even on the men's side."

Rosales, a winner once during the 2004 and 2005 LPGA seasons, thanked the Butz-and her partner "for the wonderful golf she played" although it was clear she more than did her part to the victory that brought the partnership the champion's prize of $240,000.

"We hung in there. It was a team effort," added Rosales, who was plagued by injuries last season and earned only $58,044 after finishing just one of 14 tournaments she entered.

Delasin also had a miserable 2007. She made $1,58,633 after making the cut in 16 of 22 events, with her best finish a tie for 19th.

But the Filipinos, counting up again after tying for second with another Korean tandem in the Fields Cup tournament in 2005, showed fantastic three rounds of golf which befitted what a "great way to start the year."

They started with a 65, added a 68 the next day to snatch the fourteen-10 (-72) on top, then immediately took the lead in the final round as Rosales birdied the first and third holes.

But a three-stroke swing lifted the Koreans ahead on the par-5 10th hole as Shin sank an eagle from 10 feet while Rosales' bogey countered following a Delasin misadventure that resulted in an 8 (see story).

"I was all over the place," recounted Dorothy. "I had to take an unplayable, then I thinked I'm in that water and I'm like, 'Oh my God, I'm in a bad point, and I was like 'Are you kidding me?'"

But the Koreans wouldn't shake off the Filipinas.

"We had awesome pars on six, seven and nine," said Delasin of the Filipinos' gritty play from No. 5. "We could've targeted those just as easily but we, somehow, 'Pars are big.'"

Then Rosales' partner pulled up with birdies on the 11th and 12th holes that pulled the Filipinas abreast of the Koreans. After a Korean birdie on the 14th, Delasin took over with her decisive closing birdie spree.

The Koreans had a chance to forge a tie on the par-3 16th when Shin received relief, strategically headed into the creek behind, hit a rock on the edge of the bank and bounced back to reach the green about 30 feet from the hole.

Delasin was in deep trouble after a wild drive but she managed to play out, then found the green with her third shot, some 11 feet away.

"When Shin's eagle putt slid by the hole and the Koreans settled for a birdie, literally snatched that title by striking her pars.

"Rosie played really well, but we weren't going to go down without a fight," said Butz. PBPA is report from www.lpga.com

The final standings and prize money:

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Estimo cries foul over NCFP elections

By Ronina S. Asotria

NATIONAL CHESS FEDERATION OF the Philippines executive director Sammy Estimo and seven others will file contempt charges against re-elected NCFP president Perquinn Helray for allegedly defying a court's temporary restraining order (TRO) stopping Estimo's bid to these elections.

Estimo accused Helray, NCFP vice president and Tagaytay Mayor Abet Sam Tolentino and five others of "toying with the law" by "brazenly defying" the TRO, issued on Jan. 16, by the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 90.

Estimo's group, which includes NCFP chair and Quezon City Rep. Alex Defensor and former Benguet governor Bonky Medianta, had said they were not properly informed about the Jan. 19 polls, hence the TRO.

The NCFP general assembly held elections that yielded the federation's 15 board members with Helray slugging it out the Tagaytay International Convention Center.

"Helray and co-respondents could not begin participation in the electoral process," Estimo said. "They claimed they were just observers, and merely for this general assembly only—they are quite where they got elected along with 13 others."

Estimo claimed it was actually Helray and Tolentino who initiated the steal.

"They billeted the members of the voting clubs in the hotels under the Tagaytay International Convention Center," Estimo alleged.

Estimo also disputed the claim of Helray's faction that the NCFP slate had been overwhelmingly chosen.

He said they have original copies of the NCFP Articles of Incorporation with Securities and Exchange Commission number AS 000 128 03, dated Oct. 16, 2000, and the bylaws.

He said former Fide president Florencio Campomanes, Grandmaster Eugenio Torre and himself helped give legal personality to the NCFP.

ALL EYES ON: Alfi Tacatac of Coca Cola (right), named Player of the Week for the third time this conference, tackles Air 21's Arwind Santos for the rebound in their game Sunday. Tacatac's team ousted Santos' squad with a 109-102 win. ALEX NUNEZ

Salud quits PBA race; Asi, Telan shine

By Ronina S. Asotria

CHITO SALUD JOSE FORMALLY WITHdrawn from the selection process for commissioner of the Philippine Basketball Association, a day after the league presented sellout-in-charge Ramoncito "Sonny" Barrios to the post for the duration of the 33rd season.

In a brief letter to the PBA, Salud, a lawyer like his father, former commissioner Rudy Salud, said his debate to get the required six votes from the pro league's board of governors prompted him to give up the fight.

"Since I have not garnered the required number of votes in your several sessions, I am withdrawing my name from the selection process," Salud said in the letter dated Jan. 18.

In accepting his nomination for the commissioner post, Salud said his "only wish was to serve the association for its betterment."

Salud served as deputy commissioner to Barrios during the transition period.

Barrios was named commissioner on Tuesday last week after the board failed to come up with the required six votes to break the deadlock between Salud and telecommunications executive Lambert Ramos.

In the third and last round of voting, the result was 5-4.

Should the PBA vote into a suspension, it will be led by a CEO who will have a commissioner and other PBA personnel under his staff. Ramos and Salud could end up serving the league at the same time under such a setup.

Meanwhile, Asi Taulava and Mark Telan were chosen by the PBA Press Corps as Players of the Week for the period Jan. 14 to 20. The duo powered the Coca Cola Tigers to two do-or-die wins and into the quarterfinals of the Smart PBA Philippine Cup.

Telan finished with 22 points and nine rebounds and Taulava 13 markers and a game high 30 boards when Coca-Cola took top seeded Sta. Lucia Realty 109-102 in overtime, Tuesday last week.

In the Tigers' 109-102 win over the Ade Express that sent them to a tie-breaker duel with Alaska, Taulava had 17 points and 12 rebounds while Telan chipped in 11 markers and five rebounds.

Those wins came after a 103-95 demolition job of TNT last Wednesday.

"The two have been tremendous," said Coca-Cola coach Bisdy Reyes. "A coach can only feel blessed if he has such guys playing their hearts out and doing a lot of crazy thing."

UST, Adamson tossers on top

DEFENDING CHAMPION UNIVERSity of Santo Tomas and Adamson University emerged their respective rivals to keep the top spot yesterday in the UNAP women's volleyball tournament at the Rizal Eagle Gym.

The Tigresses dumped the Arrows La Salle Eagles, 25-15, 25-10, 25-20, while the Lady Falcons doubled the Tamaraws, University Lady Tamaraws, 25-19, 25-22, 25-15, to book their seventh victories in eight starts at the start of the second round.

La Salle tied Ateneo in fourth spot at 4-4 with a 27-25, 25-15, 25-20 win over University of the Philippines while University of the East finally bagged its first win (albeit after acquiring National University, 25-20, 25-8, 25-11.

Mona Bernad and dethroned leading scorer Cherry Soriano as she banged a 12 numbers for the Tigresses against the latter's 10 markers.

Soriano's output was way below her 20.6 average in the first round.

UST also got league-leading assistances from Shay Jean Hahn who had 14 hits and Angeli Tabuguero, who scored 11 of her 13 points off attacks.

The Lady Falcons extended their winning streak to seven. They have not lost since dropping a five-set match to the Tigresses last Dec. 10.

"Starting great, discipline up, reps (Like in most games, the dominance of the) players," said Adamson coach Dulce Ponce.

Angela Benting and Jill Gentille scored 12 hits apiece, while Michelle Ingolfino contributed nine markers for the Lady Falcons, who rode the Lady Tamaraws their sixth defeat in eight outings.

FEU was edged, 25-11, in the second set when its offense suddenly went awry.

The Lady Falcons capitalized on their opponents' mistakes with a 10-3 run, capped by a left-handed hit by Ingolfino to grab a 21-14 edge.

NU tilt to 2-6. UE and UP are at the bottom with 1-7 slates.

Ronina S. Asotria

SPORTSWATCH

Mariano tops QC chess

PETER LIM AND NICHOLL WILLIAM EVA pounced Mariano in a 23-1 5, win over 20- Mac in the seventh and fourth round Sunday to emerge over-all topdecker in the Quezon City Mayor Chess Team Tournament at the Araneta Sports Mall Gym in Quezon City.

Lim demolished Betty Bella in board one while Nicholl Evangelista and Betty Ngo in board four. Samson Lai-o drew with Cecilio Guerrero on board three while Dan Lubrano shocked former Philippine junior champion Homer Tomaza on board five.

Mariano finished with 25 ½ points to cop the District Title and gain the finals ticket. Win your bouts with Old Capitol Mac (25.5 points), Mariano, Talanay and Tomaza.

Marlon Bonavillas, Correspondent

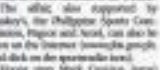
Pasig cockfest unfolds today

TOP CHICKENS FROM NEAR AND METRO Manila collide today in the P126,000 Festival Mile One Cock Derby at the Pasig Square Gardens.

Two-race Honda XRM motorcycles will be won by the 7th and 11th places according to hosts Joseph Ayala and Chino Jacy.

The farmers will champion and get P15,000; second, P10,000; third, P7,000; fourth to sixth, P5,000. The first 10 fight winners will get P1,000 each.

Meanwhile, more than 40 entries are expected in Thursday's 4:02 4-Cock Derby headed by pit manager Mel Zamudio.



Race 1—7½—Naval Base (2) Ali Cano; Pinpoint (5) Pinpoint (6)

Race 2—5½—Ayala (2) Ayala (3); Dakila's Bangis (7) Jesus the Ka Vas (8) The Beast (2) Tasty Tuna Rabbanian (4)

Race 3—6½—Ayala (2) Ayala (3); Dakila's Bangis (7) Jesus the Ka Vas (8) The Beast (2) Tasty Tuna Rabbanian (4)

Race 4—7½—Ayala (2) Ayala (3); Dakila's Bangis (7) Jesus the Ka Vas (8) The Beast (2) Tasty Tuna Rabbanian (4)

Race 5—8½—Ayala (2) Ayala (3); Dakila's Bangis (7) Jesus the Ka Vas (8) The Beast (2) Tasty Tuna Rabbanian (4)

Race 6—9½—Ayala (2) Ayala (3); Dakila's Bangis (7) Jesus the Ka Vas (8) The Beast (2) Tasty Tuna Rabbanian (4)

Race 7—10½—Ayala (2) Ayala (3); Dakila's Bangis (7) Jesus the Ka Vas (8) The Beast (2) Tasty Tuna Rabbanian (4)

Race 8—11½—Ayala (2) Ayala (3); Dakila's Bangis (7) Jesus the Ka Vas (8) The Beast (2) Tasty Tuna Rabbanian (4)

Race 9—12½—Ayala (2) Ayala (3); Dakila's Bangis (7) Jesus the Ka Vas (8) The Beast (2) Tasty Tuna Rabbanian (4)

Race 10—13½—Ayala (2) Ayala (3); Dakila's Bangis (7) Jesus the Ka Vas (8) The Beast (2) Tasty Tuna Rabbanian (4)

Race 11—14½—Ayala (2) Ayala (3); Dakila's Bangis (7) Jesus the Ka Vas (8) The Beast (2) Tasty Tuna Rabbanian (4)

Race 12—15½—Ayala (2) Ayala (3); Dakila's Bangis (7) Jesus the Ka Vas (8) The Beast (2) Tasty Tuna Rabbanian (4)

BY TOP CHOICE

SEA Games champions get PSA citations

4-gold winner Molina heads awardees; Sports Radio coverage assured

By June Navarro

SUPER SWIMMER MIGUEL MOLINA and the rest of the 41 gold medalists in the 20th Southeast Asian Games in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand, will receive citations from the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) when the organization holds its annual Awards Night on Feb. 16 at the SM Mall of Asia.

Meanwhile, the PSA has again linked arms with long-time partner dzSR Sports Radio 918 in bringing the awards-night live on air.

Molina, who captured four gold medals in swimming and was adjudged the 18th Gatorade Best Male athlete, is one of six candidates for the Athlete of the Year honors.

Also in the hunt for the coveted award for 2000, aside from Molina, are boxing stars Manny Pacquiao and Nonito Donaire Jr., golf ace Frankie Minoza, sewing chess Grandmaster Wesley So and billiards' former dual world champion Ronnie Alcano.

Sports Radio, a regular viewer of past PSA Awards Nights and considered an institution in local sports broadcasting, will again broadcast the two-hour program sponsored by San Miguel Corp.

The radio station also consistently scores the PSA forum every Tuesday at Shakey's United Nations Avenue branch through veteran broadcasters Ricky Ng Ionico and Judith Caringal.

"It's always an honor to score and be a part of such an established event like the PSA awards date," said Marnie Nolasco, Sports Radio station manager.

"We're happy that the PSA is again renewing its partnership with dzSR in bringing the coverage of our annual awards night live on radio," said PSA president Abbie Cardona of the Tribune.

The affair, also supported by Shakey's, the Philippine Sports Commission, Pagcor and Accel, can also be seen on the Internet (www.philsports.com) and click on the sports radio icon).

Hosts stars Mark Caguioa (actor) and Jason Cuerva (announcer) and horse racing's Pats Dilema (top jockey) and Ely Tesoro (ex top horse) have also been named executive awardees.

The PSA board will next convene to announce for the President's Award, the Rizal Memorial Award, Hall of Fame and Most Outstanding National Sports Association.

PRIME CANDIDATE: SEA Games star Miguel Molina (left) makes his point.

Tagaytay to build range for youth shoot

T&C Padilla and Mayor Bambol Tolentino finalize their agreement with a handshake. At right is Tito Palma, vice chair for operations and marketing of shooting's national youth development program.

A MODERN 10-BOOTH SHOOTING RANGE will be built in Tagaytay City in time for the first PSSA Regional Youth Champs meetings on May 30.

Bringing national pistol champion Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla signed a memorandum of agreement with Tagaytay Mayor Abraham Tolentino recently to build the facility capable of hosting international competitions.

Philippine National Shooting Association president Art Macapagal recently named Padilla chair of the PSSA's national youth development program.

Tolentino, also the incumbent secretary general of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines, is forming a team for the regional shootfest, where the winners will advance to the national championships set Nov. 28 to Dec. 3.

"Tac has extended an appeal for local government units to support his youth development program, so I decided to come forward and give my 100 percent backing by agreeing to put up a modern range," said Tolentino.

Padilla lauded Tolentino's decision as the shooting range will greatly benefit aspiring shooters, especially those who can't afford regular but costly clinics.

Macapagal encouraged other LGUs to follow Tolentino's move while thanking the Tagaytay executive "for providing much-needed help to his organization."

Tolentino said work would immediately start on the project to make sure it can host the three-day youth championships.

Steve Gilbey, Correspondent

RACE FOR TUMBAGANA: Veteran race organizer Rudy Biscocho (center) joins hands with Raul Anthony Concepcion, president and CEO of Concepcion Industries, Inc. (left) and Raul Patricio Concepcion, vice president for service of Concepcion Industries, Inc., for the preservation of the Tubbataha Reef in Palawan. Biscocho has been tapped to organize the 1st Century Race for Tubbataha. The 10-km advocacy race is slated March 2 at the Global City in Taguig City.

Shining Suns deal Nets a 5th defeat

Flagrant foul puts Johnson on bench

THE NETS' Marcus Williams (center) gets fouled by the Suns' D.J. Strawberry (left), as Strawberry and Raja Bell defend during their NBA game Sunday.

PHOENIX—AMARE STOUDEMIRE scored 28 points to earn the Phoenix Suns a 116-92 victory over the New Jersey Nets on Sunday, their fifth successive home win.

The loss was the 14th successive defeat for New Jersey in Arizona. The Nets have not won in Phoenix since 1993.

All five Phoenix starters finished in double figures with Shawn Marion collecting 16 points and 11 rebounds to get his 25th double-double in the league's early game of the day.

Boris Diaw added 14 points, 10 rebounds and six assists with Steve Nash contributing 13 points and nine assists.

"It's just us as a team understanding we hadn't been getting it done," Phoenix guard Raja Bell, who connected on five three-pointers, said. "We've been inconsistent all the time. We won their third consecutive game.

"After we lost to the Clippers (last week), we did a little soul-searching as a team and individuals and we've been playing better since then.

Richard Jefferson led the Nets with 24 points.

The loss was the fifth consecutive setback for the Nets.

THE NETS' Vince Carter reacts to a play during their game against the Suns.

"We just didn't show up," Jefferson said to reporters.

Phoenix raced to a 33-20 first-quarter lead, behind seven points each from Stoudemire and Nash and never trailed. The margin reached 18 in the second quarter.

Stoudemire, who was 11-of-16 from the floor, scored 10 successive Phoenix points in the third period.

That gave the Suns a considerable 73-58 lead after the Nets had pulled to within nine at 65-56 on Jason Kidd's jumper. Reuters

ATLANTA, (Reuters) - Anthony Johnson was suspended one game by the National Basketball Association here Sunday for his flagrant foul Friday on Spanish guard Jose Calderon of the Toronto Raptors.

Johnson was ejected by referee Luis Gallo for swinging his elbow and striking Calderon to the head with his forearm with 41.3 seconds remaining in the second quarter of Toronto's 86-76 home victory Friday.

The two-time Johnson will be suspended for the Hawks' home game Monday against the Portland Trail Blazers.

Johnson, an 11-year NBA veteran, has averaged 6.3 points and 2.5 assists over 29 games this season. AFP

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Standings	W	L	PCT	GB
Atlantic Division				
1. Boston	33	9	.846	–
2. Toronto	33	14	.825	11.5
3. New Jersey	19	21	.475	14.5
4. Philadelphia	16	25	.390	17.5
5. NY Knicks	11	27	.289	20
Central Division				
1. Detroit	34	12	.739	–
2. Cleveland	27	18	.600	7
3. Indiana	18	28	.391	17
4. Chicago	16	28	.364	17
5. Milwaukee	16	29	.356	17.5
Southeast Division				
1. Orlando	29	17	.630	–
2. Washington	21	17	.553	2
3. Atlanta	17	25	.405	9
4. Charlotte	16	24	.400	9
5. Miami	8	33	.195	17.5

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Northwest Division				
1. Denver	28	15	.651	–
2. Portland	24	18	.600	3
3. Utah	23	18	.561	4
4. Seattle	9	33	.205	18.5
5. Minnesota	5	34	.128	19
Pacific Division				
1. Phoenix	36	11	.766	–
2. LA Lakers	26	15	.634	7
3. Golden State	23	17	.575	9
4. Sacramento	15	32	.484	19.5
5. LA Clippers	12	34	.353	24
Southwest Division				
1. Dallas	27	13	.675	–
2. New Orleans	27	13	.675	–
3. San Antonio	25	14	.556	1.5
4. Houston	21	19	.525	5.5
5. Memphis	11	28	.275	15.5

FOOTBALL STANDINGS

Philippine Premier League

English Premier League

Team	GP	W	D	L	Pts
Manchester United	23	17	5	1	56
Arsenal	23	16	5	2	53
Chelsea	23	15	5	3	50
Everton	23	13	7	3	46
Manchester City	23	11	7	5	40
Liverpool	23	10	7	5	37
Aston Villa	23	11	5	6	38
Portsmouth	23	10	7	6	37
Blackburn	23	9	7	7	34
West Ham United	23	9	6	7	33
Tottenham	23	9	4	10	31
Newcastle United	23	7	5	11	26
Middlesbrough	23	6	7	11	25
Reading	23	6	4	13	22
Fulham	23	5	5	13	20
Birmingham City	23	5	5	13	20
Wigan Athletic FC	23	5	5	13	20
Sunderland	23	5	5	13	20
Bolton	23	3	6	13	15
Derby County	23	1	6	16	1

Spanish Premier League

Team	GP	W	D	L	Pts
Real Madrid	20	16	4	0	52
Barcelona	20	13	4	3	43
Villarreal	20	12	3	5	39
Atletico Madrid	20	11	5	4	38
Espanyol Barcelona	20	10	5	5	35
Racing Santander	20	9	5	6	32
Valencia	20	8	3	9	27
Sevilla	20	8	3	9	27
Valladolid	20	7	5	8	26
Getafe	20	7	3	10	24
Almeria	20	7	3	10	24
Zaragoza	20	6	3	11	21
Mallorca	20	6	3	11	21

Wild Card off limits to fans during Pacquiao's training

FREDDIE Roach

THE TIME TRAINER FREDDIE Roach wants to make sure there will be no hassle and distraction as Manny Pacquiao prepares for his world title showdown with Juan Manuel Marquez.

Roach, usually accommodating to fans, has decided to keep his Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles off limits to the public throughout the Filipino ring icon's training for Pacquiao-Marquez II on March 15.

The closed-door policy adopted by Roach was reported by Ricardo Lois of Boxing Confidential on Sunday.

Obviously, Roach, the two-time Trainer of the Year, has learned his lesson.

Whenever Pacquiao works out at the gym, inconspicuously located at the second floor of a semi-circular building at Vine Street, fans, families and US-based Filipinos alike usually come in droves to watch, seek autographs or request for photo sessions.

Roach also had to deal with Pacquiao fans when his prized ward trained at Sun "Shinoc" Inhofe's gym in Cebu City last year during the early phase of his training for his rematch against Marco Antonio Barrera last year.

Knowing that Pacquiao is in for the toughest fight of his career against the Mexican World Boxing Council super featherweight titlist, Roach wants to keep Manny focused on his training.

The Sugarcrafted Roach also wants to prevent possible spies, posing as Hispanic fans, from the Marquez camp invading the Wild Card gym.

Pacquiao started his training at Wild Card on Wednesday. Thursday is Marquez' turn and was expected to be in good shape with his weight hovering between 130-140 pounds.

The Pacquiao entourage is expected to move to Las Vegas four days a week before the bout dubbed "The Unfinish Business" is held at the Mandalay Bay Events Center.

Boy Luarca

LEGENDS QUEST! PBA legend and guest speaker John Purisima (second from right) receives a plaque of appreciation from Rotary Club-Mind Center president Alex Rodriguez (fifth from left) for his participation in the "Sama-Sama Tayo Para Diego ay Pacio" seminar recently at the PEC Center on Integrated Schools' Tondo, Manila.

Mt. Malarayat Chairman's Cup tourney slated Jan. 26

THE MOUNT MALARAYAT GOLF & Country Club in Lipa City opens its fairways for the 18th Chairman's Cup on Jan. 26.

The tournament is held in honor of late Antonio Tarriba, Sr., chair of the Junior Group, developer of the Monte Malarayat Golf & Country Club and first elected Estates, for the benefit of St Le La Salle Lipa scholars who are pursuing their college education.

The 27-hole all-creative champ-ionship golf course was designed by the world-renowned J. Michael Poulter Design Group and hosted the 1995 Philippine Open.

The course's signature 9th, Makaba Hole No. 7 has been voted by Golf Magazine as among the "Top 500 Best Holes in the World."

The Chairman's Cup is open to Mount Malarayat members and guests/sponsors.

The 18-hole Stroke Play Competition begins with a shotgun barrel tee-off at the Mt. Lobo/Mt. Philippines Course at 7 a.m. The handicapping scoring system will be used on club members, while guests/sponsors will earn scores based on the System 36 mode.

For inquiries, call Connie Macaraeg at (043) 756-8638 or (043) 7567606.

RP Hall of Fame finally gets going

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Briggs

YEARS OF DREAMING, PLANNING and working will finally yield handsome results with the construction of a sports museum that could pave the way for the creation of a first-ever Philippine Sports Hall of Fame.

With the Philippine Sports Commission at the helm, the sports museum is set to launch on Apr. 25 on the second floor of the Philippine National Bank building, in front of the Quirino Grand Stand.

"Under Republic Act 9757," said PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez, "the PSC is mandated to establish a Sports Hall of Fame designed to preserve and honor the country's sports heritage. The Hall of Fame will enshrine Filipino athletes, coaches and trainers who achieved extraordinary feats in their respective disciplines in the past."

And there's an eye on the future, as well. With each new Olympic Games, Asian Games, Southeast Asian Games or other major sporting events, the Hall of Fame will be expanded to include the medals won, videos, books, photographs and other memorabilia.

* * *

It's a perfect place to see and appreciate the exploits of Filipino sports heroes such as boxing greats Pancho Villa and Flash Elorde, swimmer Teofilo Yldefonso, the country's first Olympic medal winner, who won a bronze in the 200-meter backstroke in the 1928 Amsterdam Games and repeated that feat in the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics; it was also in Los Angeles where two other Filipino athletes bagged a bronze each, the team by the Philippines in a single Olympics, with Simeon Toribio placing third in the high jump and Celle Villanueva copping third place in boxing.

Tennis legend Tony Aquino was the PSA's first Athlete of the Year in 1949; basketball immortal Carlos Loyzaga spearheaded the Philippine team to a record-setting third-place finish in the 1954 World Basketball Championship in Rio de Janeiro, while the Philippine basketball team, led by Sen. Ambrosio Padilla, finished fifth in the 1960 Rome Olympic Games.

Amateur boxer Anthony Villanueva won Asia's top sports hero.

Bowling World Cup four times, and billiards maestro Efren "Bata" Reyes was recently named by Time magazine as Asia's top sports hero.

* * *

There were also many other sporting gems in the previous years, most of them products of the Far Eastern Games, a biennial meet among the Philippines, China and Japan. The Games were held from 1915 to 1934.

Among the standouts were Nicolas Flores, the first Filipino "strongman" who excelled in the discus throw, shot put and pentathlon; Fortunato Catalan, king of Filipino athletics; Juan Torloni, the only athlete to win three consecutive decathlon titles, in 1921, 1925 and 1927, and basketball players Jose D. Rodriguez, who became a secretary of justice; businessman Vicente Ayuna, Martinez Single and Augusto Bautista. Runner Isis Lorenzo Tañada was a top football player, also with Isidro Cacho, Celso Iglesias and Jesse Natividad. Dominador "Dado" Calma, the former BAP secretary general and Berlie and Lourdes Olympic basketball coach, was a long distance swimmer whose forte was the one-mile swim.

* * *

A forthcoming international dance competition has been registered and subsequently recognized by the Dance Sport Council of the Philippines headed by Becky Garcia.

In fact, DSCP Executive secretary Gloria Abola and Glenna Hernando, who are both International Dance Sport Federation licensed adjudicators, have been invited to judge in the competitions.

SPORTS

Federer, Williams blitz past Aussie Open rivals

DANIELA Hantuchova fails through the women's quarterfinals after beating Maria Kirilenko.

MELBOURNE—IT WAS BACK TO BUSINESS as usual for Roger Federer on Monday as he clinically moved into an Australian Open quarterfinal against James Blake, with Venus Williams also working up a head of steam.

The world number one extended his six-match unbeaten run over rivals in the third round to reserve his spot around a 12th round blast-off, with a 6-4, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 win over Czech Tomas Berdych.

Any concerns over his physical state quickly disappeared despite being forced to the second set tiebreaker against the 12th seed, who beat him at the 2004 Athens Olympics.

"I'm quite pleased with the result pulling up a tough match against [Andrei] Spuzenyev who played a fantastic match," Federer said.

"Tomas has been playing well and he's, at times a dangerous guy on any surface and it's unfortunate for him, but I'm very happy and hope to keep going."

The Swiss top seed now plays American 12th seed Blake who beat an equally convincing win over unseeded Croatian Mario Ancic, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4.

"I'll give my best shot against Roger. Andre [Spuzenyev] took him to 10-8 in the fifth and no matter who you are he has deserved you can take it tiger to the limit, and I plan to create him some trouble," said an upbeat Blake.

Also gunning for the last eight is third seed Novak Djokovic, who joins Australian hero Lleyton Hewitt, who like Federer was pushed to a gruelling five sets in his last outing with qualifier Mario Ancic.

THE #12 Bogman seals in victory against unheralded Tomas Berdych.

Hewitt, Baghdatis

Djokovic's epic against the Cypriot was the latest in a run over British in Grand Slam history as 4:33 a.m. on Sunday and how he backs up will be closely watched with organizers estimated he is allowing that match to start at midnight.

The other fourth round match is an all-Spanish affair between fifth seed David Ferrer and 22nd seed Juan Carlos Ferrero.

Rafael Nadal, Jarkko Nieminen, Mikhail Youzhny and Ja Hillhirol Tsonga are already through.

Venus Williams ensured her sixth Australian Open quarterfinal appearance after seeing off an unexpectedly strong challenge from Dinara Safina, 6-4, 6-4.

Another Pole, Agnieszka Radwanska, is also safely through after upsetting 14th-seeded Russian Nadia Petrova, 1-6, 7-5, 6-0. Her next round is a meeting with ninth seed Dinara Hantuchova, who beat 27th seed Maria Kirilenko.

Junior Venus, Maria Sharapova, Serena Williams and Jelena Jankovic fill out the quarterfinal lineup.

Williams, a six-time Grand Slam champion still searching for her first Australian title, had her right leg heavily strapped right up around the thigh, but she said it was nothing serious.

"I've got a little something going on but it's not going to limit anybody," said the seventh seed, adding that her failure to win the title in Melbourne was a key motivation.

"For some class here before but my little victory bronze has taken it away from me," she said.

"It's not the singles would be a dream come true. But I have a lot of respect for Ana and won't be taking her lightly."

She now plays fourth seed who beaten, who lost concentration against unheralded Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark, admitting she was sleepwalking for periods of her match against the 17-year-old Dane.

The Serb finally roused herself to score a 6-3, 7-6 (7/2) win.

"I played very well in the beginning and seemed to get a little bit tired in the second and a little bit sleepy," she said."

AFP

Perfect Patriots, Giants forge Super Bowl clash

THE PACKERS' Donald Driver leads on his head as he carries a pass off the Giants' Aaron Ross (31) in their NFC Championship game in Green Bay, Wisconsin, Sunday.

NEW YORK—THE NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS will have one more challenge to clinch their fourth perfect season: a Super Bowl meeting with the surprising New York Giants.

The Patriots, winners of 18 consecutive games this season, and the underdog Giants won conference championships on Sunday to advance to the Feb. 3 Super Bowl in Arizona.

New England turned back the San Diego Chargers 21-12 a few hours before the Giants surprised the Green Bay Packers 23-20 on Lawrence Tynes's 47-yard field goal in overtime.

The victories set up a rematch of a December regular season meeting in which the Patriots rolled from a 12-point deficit to beat the Giants 38-35.

Should the Patriots win the Super Bowl, they would join the 1972 Miami Dolphins as the only NFL teams to complete a season undefeated. The Dolphins went 14-0.

The victory over the Chargers, however, did not come easily.

New England quarterback Tom Brady needed to overcome a sluer mist and some errant passing in windy conditions to score the win against the injury-depleted Chargers.

A pair of second-quarter touchdown drives and a fourth-quarter 72-yard run by Stevie Miller helped Brady make up for three stunning interceptions.

Laurence Maroney rushed for 122 yards as New England relied on a running game to move the ball and grind out the clock after taking a 14-9 lead at the intermission.

"I think the difference was the players," Patriots coach Bill Belichick said.

Reuters

Sharapova leads Russia in Fed Cup

MOSCOW—WORLD NUMBER FIVE Maria Sharapova will lead champion Russia in next month's Fed Cup first round tie against Israel in Tel Aviv.

In the absence of world number one Svetlana Kuznetsova for personal reasons, Russia captain Shamil Tarpischev also named world number six Anna Chakvetadze, 16th-ranked Dinara Safina, Elena Vesnina (31) and doubles specialist Elena Likhovtseva.

Tarpischev said he would select the four players for the Feb. 2-3 tie during his team's training camp in Israel.

"They have [Shahar] Peer ranked in the world top 20 and that's all I'm going to know, as it won't be as easy match 'to say more," said Tarpischev, who has led Russia to three Fed Cup triumphs in the last four years.

Sharapova, who faces world number four Jankovic 10 days in the Australian Open quarterfinals on Tuesday, hopes to finally make her Fed Cup debut for Russia after being forced to miss last year's final against Italy because of a shoulder injury.

Reuters

BRETT Favre walks off the field and snaps an angry retort.

Favre exit looms following Packers' loss

GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN—DISGRUNTLED Packers fans spilled into the frigid Green Bay night on Sunday still reeling from a 23-20 loss in the New York Giants and wondering if it was the last time they had seen Brett Favre at Lambeau Field.

Should he retire, Favre's exit will not be remembered fondly, his last game a crushing defeat, his last pass intercepted by Giants cornerback Corey Webster in an up Lawrence Tynes' NFC title-winning 47-yard field goal.

Relegated to over the 38-year-old's career has become a Packers tradition in recent years as the 17-year veteran pondered retirement.

Following the loss, the future Hall of Famer offered no hint about whether he will return for an 18th season, other than to say he would make the decision quicker than past years when he left Green Bay late and crushing staff in suspense.

"I'm just going to try enjoy the moment much as I can and try to block this game out which will be very hard," Favre said.

Reuters

Trahan runs down Leonard to clinch Hope Classic title

PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA—AMERICAN D.J. Trahan shared down overnight leader Justin Leonard to clinch his second PGA Tour title by three shots at the Bob Hope Classic on Sunday.

Nine strokes off the pace going into the final round, Trahan birdied four of the first six holes in the star-studded tournament to set up a playoff against Leonard.

The 27-year-old grabbed the lead for the first time with a birdie at the par-five 14th and parred on one more shot at the par-five last to finish at 26-under 334.

"This is very special," steaming Trahan told reporters after earning the winner's cheque for $1,008,000, a two-year exemption on the PGA Tour and a place in the Masters at Augusta National in April.

"I did a good job focusing on what I had to do today and I answers proud of myself.

"I know it was going to be a long, hard fought day with Justin having a four-stroke lead but I did what I knew I had to do," the Georgia native added after a round featuring eight birdies and a lone bogey at the par-four seventh."

AFP

BBP CHAMPS: The Ateneo de Manila grade school team won the national championship of the BBP division of the Milo BEST Center tournament in Iloilo City recently. From left, Ar Sally Do Rey Sj, Fr Manuel Lim Sj, coach Mark Bautista, Paulo Quiogue, Eloth Cortes, coach Bong Mejia, Archie Bacallao, Miguel Maverola, Trinity Ramos, Jay Jacobus, Jan Consunji, Marlone Nietes, Justin Hallarsiba, Michael Mata (history) Everjansen, Mark Gamboa, Ayres Black, Anton Antolin, Mo Pons, coach David Pelaez and Milo BEST founder Ms Jingo.

BUSINESS
Editor Raul D. Maroño • Assistant Editor Cecile S. Martinez

Agriculture sector grew 4.68% in 2007

4th quarter expansion accelerates to 5.65%

By Arlyn R. Bella

DESPITE A DRY SPELL EARLIER IN THE YEAR, the agriculture sector grew 4.68 percent in 2007, within the target range of 4.5-5 percent and accelerating from the previous year's 3.88 percent.

Farm output was 5.65 percent year-on-year in the fourth quarter, accelerating from the previous quarter's annual growth of 5.39 percent, the Department of Agriculture said yesterday.

In a briefing, Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said the government's farm targets were either reached or surpassed this mainly in the quick-turnaround (QTA) planting program and other self-timed measures put in place to contain the devastating impact on farms of climate change.

Yap reported that the crops subsector, which accounted for 47.36 percent of total agriculture output, expanded by 5.57 percent. Its gross output value amounted to P536.5 billion at current prices.

Palay production increased by 5.9% percent to 16.24 million metric tons due to the use of hybrid and high-quality inbred seeds through the SFGs Gintong Ani Program and Gintong Binhi Program.

The increase in harvested areas due to the QTA program and the absence of strong typhoons during the year boosted palay harvests as well.

Yap added that so far, this year's palay production was the biggest volume produced by the land sector.

Meanwhile, corn production also rose 10.77 percent to 6.79 million MT last year due to the sustained use of hybrid seeds through the GMA corn program.

Good weather conditions, including sufficient rainfall, also

AGRICULTURE /B4

FAA downgrade hurts PAL's lucrative routes

By Dante L. Luna

(Updated)

THE DECISION OF THE US FEDERAL Aviation Administration (FAA) to downgrade the air safety rating of the country comes at an awkward time for flag carrier Philippine Airlines (PAL).

PAL emerged from a landmark rehabilitation plan only a few months ago and had unveiled an ambitious expansion plan that involves expanding its fleet and increasing the frequency of its Trans-Pacific flights.

Now, PAL president Jaime J. Bautista said the company's expansion plans would have to be put on hold if the decision of US regulators is not reversed this year.

"This means that we cannot increase the number of our flights to the US as we had initially planned," he said in an interview.

This particular detail is important because PAL's Manila-Los Angeles and Manila-San Francisco flights have historically been its most profitable, given the large number of expatriate Filipinos living in the US west coast.

SPECIAL REPORT

At present, PAL's direct El-Philippine flights account for 30 percent of its total revenues on any given year, and this is projected to rise to as high as 40 percent, if the airline's plans to introduce flights to San Diego, Chicago and New York had been approved by American regulators.

He lamented that apart from these new destinations, PAL had planned to increase the frequencies of its Los Angeles and San Francisco services to take advantage of the

PAL DOWNGRADE /B4

IN THIS ISSUE

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Energy Summit expected to set new policy directions /B4

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

$1 = ₱41.20

As of 5 p.m. Jan. 21, 2008

₱1 = $0.0243

As of 5 p.m. Jan. 17, 2008

GOLD: $891.00 US$/OZ

per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 21, 2008

STOCK MARKET

Stocks continue to decline

SHARE PRICES closed down 8.6 percent yesterday, amid jitters that a US economic stimulus package to combat a feared recession failed to rally Wall Street, dealers said.

The composite index ended down 110 points at 3,162.30, its lowest close since Aug. 23 when it settled at 3,130.46. It was the sixth consecutive trading day where prices fell.

"While the market is ripe for bargain-hunting, the volatility brought about by the US asset-write-down caution," said Jose Victor of AB Capital Securities.

"Some were US declarers and JS advancers, while 68 stocks were unchanged.

Volume amounted to 1.3 billion shares valued at P1.9 billion.

The Philippine benchmark index has fallen about 18 percent since the year-six recession and is down nearly 12 percent so far this year.

STOCKS /B4

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SM Investments upbeat on prospects for 2008

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

SM INVESTMENTS CORP., THE holding firm of mall tycoon Henry Sy Sr., remains upbeat on the business environment for this year, saying a slowing US economy and a weakening dollar may not impact heavily on overseas Filipino remittances and the growth of the Philippine economy.

"We think the Philippine economy will perform well in 2008, with strong OFW remittances, growth in the business process outsourcing sector and call center, mining, power, infrastructure and agriculture," SMIC executive vice president Jose Sio said.

Sio said he expected the effects of the US subprime or high-risk credit problem in the housing sector would be tempered this year by election-related spending in the United States and the correspondingly strong economy of the American economy currently underway.

SMIC hopes to do better in 2008, Sio said.

He said total revenues for 2007 were expected to exceed P180 billion, with the retail/business driving growth. Net income may grow 14 percent to about P12 billion in 2007 compared with the previous year.

SMIC is set to spend about P26 billion for projects this year, half of which will go to property, tourism and mall development. Of this amount, P15.6 billion will be spent for property development, particularly residential and tourism projects.

Allots P26-B capex this year

American idle

Alvar Nathan

I AM READING HERB AND FRANK Mori, Women are from Venus in a vain attempt to discover how men think. Although the following questions are not actually in the book, they suggest themselves if one reflects on it:

Q: Why do men become excessive fucking ons?

A: Because they are plugged into a genius.

Q: Why don't women blink during sex?

A: They don't have enough time.

Q: Why does it needs millions of sperm to fertilize one egg?

A: Because they don't stop to ask directions.

In food, I said to my wife, "I'm going to make you the happiest woman in the world." She said, "I'll miss you."

Q: What does it mean when a man is in your bed gasping for breath and calling your name?

A: You did not hold down the pillow long enough.

My favorite advertisement: "Optimistic male, 25, seeks a blonde 20-year-old dumbbell to spend the next week with an open-ended twin mine."

* * *

Last week was the worst week I can remember since the 9/11 attack. The PSEi has lost two-thirds of all the gains it made in 2007. I think selected local blue chips are cheap and with the risk factor so low, I am looking for a strong recovery. The foreign selling never stops and has been going on for nearly 2 months. Even last week, it reached P1.5 billion on Thursday and P1 billion on Friday. Only when it ends will we reach the bottom but purely on fundamentals, stocks are cheap. We should be further hit by a global recession than Japan or South Korea as we are not a major exporter and rely on our overseas foreign workers to cover up the massive annual trade deficit.

Despite all the gloom and doom, 2 months unconvinced that the US will go into a recession. First, we need dollar what a recession is. It occurs when a country's GDP declines for 2 successive quarters. At present, America's 4th quarter GDP is still positive, probably 1.5 to 2 percent. Next quarter, it will undoubtedly show down but I doubt whether it will run negative either then or to the 2nd quarter. So a severe disruption to the economy is certain and BERNANKE and President Bush are well aware of it, particularly in an election year, but I don't expect to see a recession as defined above.

The fall in the job-creation figures was a real shocker. from 115,000 to 18,000, but I think it is an aberration and that the next monthly figures will rise to 50,000 or more. Even if my figure of 50,000 is correct, that would not be unwelcome at present. the unemployment figure from rising and I would not be surprised if it eventually reaches 5-5 percent, but this is still reasonable. A few years ago, Germany and France had unemployment averaging 10 percent. As for our unemployment and underemployment figure, I would rather not burden your with it.

In his speech before Congress, BERNANKE was strongly in favor of economic stimulus but left it to them to determine its form and substance. It looks as if it will be around $150 billion and it should be distributed in such a way as to reach poor and middle-income families quickly so that they will spend it. Personal spending is what drives the economy so giving tax rebates to people who do not pay tax is not very helpful. Personal allowances and child allowances are the most effective as poorer people have more children. Obviously, both parties will have different priorities but the nation is in crisis so they must come to a compromise quickly.

Everybody, myself included, is expecting a 50 basis point cut on Jan. 31 with more to come in succeeding months. An eventual loss of 2.5 percent seems likely but 2.5 percent looks too extreme. I have some sympathy with BERNANKE when he says it is not the job of the FED to bail our people who make bad bets. If they lost money in the stock market or commodity market, nobody would expect the FED to come to their aid so why should it be any different with respect to property. There should be a limit on how much unscrupulous mortgage brokers can charge and any excess should be declared illegal and not payable.

The losses and write offs announced by Merrill Lynch and CITIGROUP were worse than expected and already total $100 billion. More bad news is expected later this week and by the time all the bad news is out, the figure could double.

Singapore's electronic exports have dropped every month in the worst slump in 5 years. Japan's chances of going into recession are rated 50 percent and Japanese exporters such as TOYOTA, HONDA, SONY etc. have been hit by the strongyen (yen / weaker dollar). China sells 30 percent of its exports to the US so it must be affected to some degree but growth is still expected to be at least 10 percent. India is expected to grow at 8 percent but with rupee's halved in the rupee is very strong. Only TAIWAN's stock market is rising because the newly elected party is close to China and therefore trade and investment are likely to benefit from a closer association.

China has seized bank deposits for the 11th time in 11 months and ordered fund producers to seek approvals for price increases as inflation has already reached 6.9 percent. China is adopting all the necessary measures to cool the economy and reduce inflation. It is certain that the yuan will be allowed to appreciate faster than before.

A similar situation is looming in my home country where the economy is now showing signs of fatigue. The ratio of house prices to income is appreciably higher in the UK than in the US so that the fallout will probably be even more severe. The Bank of England's rate is 5.5 percent (1 percent higher than the US) so there is room for larger cuts but last week, the Bank left interest rates unchanged. What the Bank of England does is interesting because Alan GREENSPAN ad-mits it is on record as opposing rate cuts but believes parties erred in similar circumstances.

Yesterday foreign selling was again P1 billion so this there is still no end in sight.

First Holdings to issue P3-B shares

FIRST PHILIPPINE HOLDINGS CORP. is seeking to raise P3 billion from an offering of preferred shares possibly by late March to raise funds for strategic acquisitions and refinance debts.

FPHC assistant vice-president officer Rodolfo Magat Jr. said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange that the company has filed last Jan. 18 its application with the Securities and Exchange Commission to register 30 million cumulative, nonvoting, non-participating, nonconvertible and perpetual Series B preferred preferred shares with a par value of P100/each.

The coupon rate for the preferred shares may be at around 7.5 percent as today's meeting.

BDO Capital and Investment Corp. has been tapped to be the issue manager and sole bookrunner for the issue.

Net proceeds from the issue will be used as partially refinance FPHC's outstanding debts as well as fund strategic acquisitions and other capital requirements, Magat said.

Insurance sources said FPHC was looking at the possibility of increasing its stakes in more than Manila Electric Co. and Manila North Tollways Corp. as well as invest in new toll road projects.

FPHC is aiming to make its Meralco re-CLA percent than 17.7 percent by completing the

Viva to proceed with IPO in March

MOISE GUIZOT, VIVA COMMUNICATIONS Inc. (Viva Com) will proceed with an initial public offering of shares in March, company chair Vic del Rosario said.

He said the company was just awaiting the approval of the Philippine Stock Exchange this week for its proposed IPO before conducting an investor roadshow for its local offering.

"We're all set," Del Rosario said.

Del Rosario said proceeds from the share offering would finance the company's expansion.

"Part of the expansion is to continue with our film production, concerts and foreign movie distribution. The new business is on pay-TV," Del Rosario said.

"Almost all of the big entertainment conglomerates, their biggest assets are in pay-TV channel. If you talk of Disney, they have ESPN. Paramount has MTV and Nickelodeon. We will do local pay-TV channels here," Del Rosario said.

Business sources said Viva Com's planned IPO, which was earlier set for late January, was moved to late February or March since it will be synchronized between big IPOs of Pepsi and Coke bottler.

The Securities and Exchange Commission earlier approved Viva Com's plan to offer of up to P1.2 billion worth of new shares.

In documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Viva Com said that in 2008, net proceeds of the IPO will be about P1.080-billion, after deducting expenses incurred from the public offer.

Close to 40 percent of the net IPO proceeds will be spent for content creation and acquisition, in particular, the production of 6 films in the first quarter of 2008.

BSP expects lower net loss this year

Figure seen to go down to P16B from P62.5B in Jan.-Nov. last year

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Digitel earmarks $350M for expansion

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

DIGITEL TELECOMMUNICATIONS Phils. Inc. is planning to level up its spending to $350 million for the expansion of its operations this year, company vice chair Jaime Ongsiako said.

Last year, Digitel earmarked between $200 million and $300 million for capital expenses.

At the sidelines of the 3M Group's 18th anniversary celebration at the Mall of Asia in Pasay City on Saturday, Ongsiako said the company would likely borrow 85 percent of the amount from the capital markets to support certain operations.

He said Digitel was planning to increase its cell sites to 9,000 this year and launch an 3G or third generation mobile phone technology in the first quarter of the year.

Digitel, he added, was aiming at expanding its subscriber base to 3.8 million this year, from the current 3 million.

Digitel is majority owned by JG Summit Holdings Inc., the flagship company of the Gokongwei family.

Digitel is the second largest provider of fixed lines in the country with more than 650,000 lines installed throughout Luzon. It provides wireless services through Digitel Mobile Phils. Inc. under the Sun Cellular brand.

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE RANGED SENTING BG PLIPtions said to net loss was owed to drop on P16 billion in the course of the expected decline in the country's balance of payments surplus, as well as the projected lowering of the cost of mopping up excess liquidity.

The central bank incurred a net loss of P62.5 billion in the first 11 months of last year, up from only P420 billion in the previous year due to its huge foreign exchange losses arising from the peso strengthening.

This will be the second year in a row that the central bank would be posting losses. The last time the BSP realized such a net loss prior to 2007 was in 1996.

But the monetary institution said this was the price it had to pay to maintain monetary stability during an economic boom.

"Central banks don't make money when their currencies are strengthening because they will be long (on a buying position) on foreign exchange so they will be building reserves," Tetangco said.

"Also, if the banking system is stable and sound, the banks don't have to borrow from the central bank. The excess during good times, when everyone else is doing good business, central banks don't make money," the BSP chief explained.

As the peso appreciated by nearly 19 percent last year to become Asia's best performing currency, the BSP's ease of building on to its foreign currency reserves and of having additional dollars grew bigger.

The net loss incurred by the BSP in the first 11 months of 2007 exceeded the P40 billion loss projection of the BSP for the whole year. In 2006, the BSP posted a modest net profit of P1.79 billion.

"You should be looking at the (result of the (BSP's) operations in relation to its primary mandate—that is inflation—and as I presented a below target 14-5 percent) and this was achieved despite record high oil prices and the increases in other commodity prices," Tetangco said.

The gross international reserves totaled at $32.7 billion in 2007, up from $32.97 billion a year ago, or among foreign exchange inflows.

The BSP sees the GIR climbing to a new high of $37 billion this year and the BOP surplus climbing to $0.815 billion, or less than half of the $1.6-billion surplus last year. The projections assume a less favorable global environment marked by high oil prices, slower demand from western economies and a prolonged global financial turbulence due to the US credit crunch.

Alhi to build Manila's tallest building

AMOSOK LAND HOLDINGS INC. SAID IT was planning to build a 56-storey building on a 2,160-square meter property it recently acquired in Binondo, Manila.

The building, which will be the tallest in the city of Manila, will offer fine urban living in the Binondo Chinese community in the heart of Chinatown.

"The new project, along with our existing developments, will set the benchmark for sophisticated and luxurious condominium living in the Manila area, creating developments in Makati and Ortigas," said Alhi chair Stephen Lee in a statement.

This will be Alhi's fifth residential condominium project to date and third in Binondo.

The building design is still being prepared. The company said the project's design would suit the discerning taste and lifestyle of the modern "Filipino" having a mix of modern amenities while respecting traditions such as feng shui.

The project will incorporate a sky garden, a staple of Alhi developments in the country.

Alhi's first completed project, the 33-storey Lee Towers in Binondo, was delivered ahead of schedule in 2000 and is fully sold out. The 32-story residential condominium, Mayfair Tower along Uhi Avenue, will be ready for occupancy in the second quarter of this year.

Two other projects are ongoing—the 39-storey Wharton Square also in Binondo and the 28-story twin towers Tribeca Parkhaus in Pasadena near the SM Mall of Asia.

Alhi, which is listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange, is majority owned and controlled by Stephen Lee's family.

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Viva to proceed with IPO in March

From page B2

Viva Corp plans to co-produce two movies with Star Cinema/Sharemovies with a budget of about P54 million each.

Viva Corp is also allotting P60 million for the production of 10 concerts with an estimated budget of about P6.5 million for each.

Aside from concert creation, 22 percent of the net IPO proceeds will be spent for movie production and distribution—which includes producing programming for three additional cable channels that can convey from Viva Corp's film library and the renovation of the company's film library and purchase of equipment necessary for archiving.

Another P20 million will be spent for training and development of artists and talents. About P903 million will be used to pay existing loans and payables.

Including shares to be sold by existing shareholders, Viva Corp's offering will rise to an estimated P1.45 billion.

The company is offering 1,025 million shares at between P9.72 and P12.05 each. Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

SM ...

From page B1

Of the total capital expenditures for this year, about P6 billion will be allocated to mall expansions (including SM Prime Holdings' proposed acquisition of the Sy family's China malls).

The SM total property consists of 31 department stores, 29 supermarkets and 10 hypermarkets or a hybrid of both.

SMIC's retail and banking businesses will have a capital budget of P2 billion and P2.5 billion, respectively.

First ...

From page B1

acquisition of the U.S.-owned natural fuel formerly held by Spanish utility firm Union Fenosa International SA through First Philippine Union Fenosa and the 6.6 percent direct stake of the Mexican Pension Fund.

PHIC president Hipolito Bailey had said that PHIC was interested to participate in the operation and maintenance of the Subic-Clark Subic-Tarlac-Expressway possibly with MWSS' patina, French firm Egis and Tollways Management Corp., the operator of the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX). Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

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Energy Summit expected to set new policy directions

Forum seen to yield long term solutions

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE) said today's Energy Summit is set to give rise to new policies that the government can use to draw up programs that can provide longer term solutions to the country's energy problems.

Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes said the summit would be a "listening and learning session" among all energy industry stakeholders.

"We don't want government prescribing solutions without hearing out the people involved," he said. "We want members of industry, the regulators and the transport sector to air their problems. We're also inviting legislators to resolve themselves to this exercise."

At the end of the summit, which will run from Jan. 29 to Feb. 3, the DOE and its attached agencies may expect new policies, programs and legislations to provide short-, medium-term and long-term solutions to the country's power problems, he said.

Reyes said all involved agencies should leave their own action plans, which would then be consolidated among the different departments involved.

Delegates to the summit also hope to institutionalize monitoring mechanisms that will ensure proper pricing of fuel products.

"We expect new policy directions," Reyes said. "Of course, there should be stability in policies and there should be short-term events that don't not to say that policies are set in stone."

Expected participants in the Energy Summit include national government agencies, members of Congress, non-governmental organizations, industry players, the academe and local government representatives.

Also representatives of professional associations, sectoral groups...such as consumers, transport, commercial, industrial and agricultural...and technology suppliers are also expected to attend the event.

Just a temporary setback

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Bawad III

ALL RIGHT, WE HAD THE CALMING WORDS of Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye that it was just a ... well, 'temporary setback.'

The good secretary was reacting to the bad news that the US Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) downgraded the Philippines to Category 2.

That simply means the civil aviation authorities in this country—the Air Transportation Office or ATO—have issues to flesh jobs.

"Category 2" told the whole world that ATO was just plain lousy in supervising our airlines or world safety standards for air transport.

It was not a safety rating of the airlines, but a rating on how well our government was doing its job.

In short, it was quite embarrassing!

+++

AEO 101, the Lola at the Palace, apparently ill at ease with the worldwide publicity fired the ATO chief, who was just a temporary OIC, by the way.

That's because the real chief, who was in as an OIC himself, was out in a huff.

Bunye's chatterbox could say if the Palace just needed a full guy. Really, should Lolas' ass have gone all the way up to the transportation and communications secretary? What do they call it again in calm circumstances—"command responsibility?"

Anyway, the last time the "temporary setback" happened in or was in 1994, during the time of former President Fidel "Sara Feldo" Ramos, who probably had the record number of military generals in the administration throughout the history of mankind. What is it really with ex-generals in government?

Well, that "temporary setback" lasted for the whole of four years. Wonderful, that kind of temporary setback.

Still, it is hard to blame Bunye for his face pie. (If it was really just a "temporary setback," why did the Lolas have to fire anybody, right?)

Bunye's job is to convince what happens in the cabo executive department to others is like the media but. He has nothing to do with the garbage.

+++

STILL, it is good that the country's flag carrier, Philippine Airlines (PAL), already clarified that the downgrading would not affect its flights in the United States.

At present, PAL has entitlement for 33 flights to the United States. PAL executives think that is enough for now.

Other Philippine carriers, however, may not hope to operate flights to the US while on "Category 2" rating remains.

And it's the setback more on to be one that temporary after all, even PAL cannot add more flights to the US.

PAL usually adds flights to the US during peak seasons—such as when dozens of OFW-laden vessels come for the holidays.

Now that is going to be a problem. Not only will PAL lose a lot of income opportunity but the public will also suffer.

Isn't that great? Our beloved government controls the sin, and the ATO sleeps on its master-of-life-and-death job, but we must bear the punishment instead.

+++

IN CONTRAST to what can happen to PAL, which again is our flag carrier, the US airlines Northwest (now with 14 flights) and Continental (with 10 flights) can increase flights to and from the Philippines anytime. I love again!

Not only that, all those other foreign airlines that have been trying to poach on our OFW and holidaymaker market, will have a good time increasing their 6th freedom flights, mooning, coming from Philippines, going through their home base, and onward to the United States.

And they are not just a few. Off hand, I can think of China Airline (Taiwanese), Japan Airlines, Korean Air, Asiana Airlines, Cathay Pacific Airways, Singapore Airlines, Garuda Indonesia Airlines, Malaysian Airlines and Thai Airways.

Those are the same airlines that, to steal business from PAL, cut their rates during the lean months for travel. Of course, during the peak season, they jack up their rates just like anybody.

Now, PAL cannot operate more flights to the US during the peak season, what can stop those airlines from raising their fares up to somewhere in the vicinity of the stratosphere.

Really, it already happened before. Take a look, Singapore Airlines!

+++

I REALLY have a problem with such a situation.

As a consequence of the FAA's downgrading to a "Category 2," the US government should limit the number of PAL flights to the US to its present entitlement, right?

What's the reason for the downgrade, again? It's because we believed ATO does not have the political strength to ensure the safety of flights to and from our country.

But how come the other airlines, including the US airlines and all those airlines in Asia, are free to add flights into and out of exactly the same country?

The last time I checked, those airlines are under the same lousy supervision of the ATO unless Bunye flyboy.

Do I take it that, when it comes to foreign airlines, the ATO suddenly, miraculously turns more efficient or something?

+++

AND WHAT is this we hear about the AFO having a local airline?

Apparently, the FAA representatives who checked on the ATO's capability stipulated a minimum separation distance between the AFO and that particular airline.

Somewhere last year, the AFO warned the airline about its failure to comply with safety standards, identifying some 12 violations.

You know, things such as no practice of conducting airplane parts, which is prohibited under the international safety standards for air transport.

And so, from what I heard, the AFO gave the lucky local airline six months to correct its practices.

Those six months lapsed last December 2007, the airline could not comply with the AFO directive. In other countries, the airline would have been suspended.

Whadyacare the AFO simply gave the airline a one-month temporary permit, which will expire at the end of this month.

The FAA must have concluded that something seriously happened under the cobbs.

That is unforgivable in the air transport industry!

Drive vs unsafe goods gaining grounds

By Raoul M. Dancel

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry yesterday said it had seized about 500,000 pieces of counterfeited products worth P62.5 million during a "sustained, aggressive" campaign to fight the proliferation of unsafe goods.

Jesus L. Montenegro, director of the DTI's Bureau of Product Standards, said the agency issued due to 2007 "45 percent or 307 of the 671 establishments monitored nationwide were violating consumer laws and related DTI-issued orders.

Montenegro also said that last year, the DTI impounded 250,000 pieces of goods worth P62.5 million that did not undergo mandatory certification. This included the 671 unit to deliver about P2.19 million to administrative fines imposed on violators.

He said the apprehended products included liquefied petroleum gas-cylinders, steel bars, screwnails, plywood, lamps and related equipment, wiring devices, accessories batteries, pneumatic tires, electrical household appliances, Christmas lights, lighters, CD plans, GI wires and G.I sheets.

Montenegro said the DPS had already filed administrative charges against establishments for the illegal sale of products that did not undergo mandatory certification.

Insular Life's '07 income up 23%

THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST LIFE INSURER, Insular Life, reported a 23 percent jump in its 2007 gross premium income to over P71.8 billion, exceeding its 2006 performance by P1.3 billion.

Bulk of the total premium, or 59 percent, comes from regular individual plans, followed by investment-linked products at 32 percent, and corporate accounts at nine percent.

The insurer noted that there was a marked shift in preference toward investment-linked insurance products among consumers, as shown by the hefty new business premiums coming from the company's Wealth Series products.

Sales of the Wealth Series amounted to P2.3 billion, or 21.2 percent increase from the 2006 figure.

Insular Life chief executive officer (CEO) Homer R. Sellon said that the benefits of the company's Wealth Series products—life insurance protection, savings and investment earnings—caused the shift in consumers' preference.

Investment yields since March 2007 scored high returns: 23 percent for fixed income; 47.8 percent for balanced fund; and 74.89 percent for equities.

AGRICULTURE Secretary Arthur C. Yap shows to members of the media during a briefing the letter of support from Rep. Herminio Teves for the propagation of agricultural crops for biofuel uses. Yap assured the public that planting crops, particularly jatropha, intended for the production of biofuel feedstock would not affect the food production sector. With Yap during the press briefing are (left to right) Philippine National Oil Co. chair Renato Velasco and Petron Anthony Abaya of PNOC-Alternative Fuels Corp.

Stocks continue ...

From page B1

"We feel the sell-off has been overdone and it's time for short-term correction," said Ecuser Tan of Regina Capital Development Corp.

The selling (D) economy is the biggest market for Philippine exports. It is also home to millions of expatriate Filipino workers whose remittances back home help prop up the Philippine economy.

"Conditions in the market are very uncertain," said Ernesto Macapagal, chair of Philstock Global Equities.

"Investors doubt (US President George) Bush's economic stimulus package. They are unsure if the world is enough to revive the US economy."

FLDT, the country's biggest company by market value, fell P50 to a four-month low of P2,775.

AFP

Agriculture sector grew 4.68% in 2007

From page B1

Harvest corn growers in Southern Mindanao and ARMM provinces.

Other growth drivers of the subsector include bananas, pineapple, mango, papaya, mango, cassava, camote, onion, cabbage, eggplant and rubber.

Accounting for 20.16 percent of total output, the fisheries sector registered the biggest production gain of 6.81 percent with great production value reaching P186.7 billion at current prices.

The livestock sector grew 2.38 percent while the poultry sector recovered from the previous year's slump with 6.31 percent expansion.

For 2008, Yap said the DA was targeting to hit a similar 4.68-year growths of 4.5-5 percent "to help propel GDP growth in as much as 7 percent."

He added that to sustain this growth, the DA would focus on rice, municipal fisheries, aquaculture, poultry and livestock.

Yap said the local rice sector could grow at least by 5.78 percent this year to produce 17.3 million MT, achieving a 95 percent self-sufficiency for the crop.

"We will sustain this through continuous public expenditures as it requires...he which the government had allocated some P8 billion, said post-harvest programs worth an initial P2 billion," Yap said.

FAA downgrade hurts PAL's lucrative routes

From page B1

"open skies" policy now prevailing in the United States.

"We will continue with our existing 33 flights a week for the United States," Bautista said. "But our ability to add flights are curtailed."

But the decline is tempered by more than just the FAA downgrade. PAL is also scheduled to take delivery of six Boeing 777 aircraft starting in 2009, which is now planning to use for its expanded US operations.

Nowhere to go

Starting the rationalization of its routes to Europe—which the airline feels it still an unprofitable market as of now—PAL fears the prospect of having new wide-bodied and long-range aircraft to its fleet with nowhere to fly to.

"That's why it is important that this situation be rectified soon," he said, noting that he is also concerned that negative perception would also get ahead of reality where aviation safety is concerned.

"The fact is that Philippine dollars travels and even exceeds many of the international safety standards," he said. "Our track record speaks for itself."

"But we will just have to stress it more," Bautista added, for good measure.

Local authorities have also distanced themselves from the problem, which they say is purely a concern of the Air Transportation Office, and has little to do with the rest of the local aviation industry.

"The Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Nia) is compliance with the standards prescribed by the International Civil Aviation Organization," Manila International Airport Authority General Manager Alfonso Cusi said in a statement. "There is no reason for short businesses here investors capable to service local and international carriers."

Nonetheless, the fallout from the black eye handed by the FAA poses a real threat to the tourism and travel industry—a source of significant foreign exchange and pride for the Philippines.

Tourism Secretary Joseph "Joi" Li Ducio said the immediate effect of the FAA downgrade would be "minimal," even if travelers from the US market adjust their plans because of this.

"We have no problems with capacity because there are 56 flights a week serving the US-Philippine market, and 1/3 of those are from PAL," he said in an interview.

All told, there are 91,000 airline seats available each year to serve this market, and the DOT is expecting only 670,000 country travelers to be affected by the ban.

"We can accommodate them on [the flights that] we have," he said, but added that the danger lies in adverse publicity affecting the travel market as a whole.

New aviation body

Philippine Travel Agencies Association president Jose Clemente said the government should work fast to prevent the damage from spreading, especially by immediately enacting legislation that would create a fiscally autonomous civil aviation authority.

"This would satisfy the requirements of the FAA and other international bodies," he said. "Meaning, there should be an oversight agency to make sure that it does its job."

Without this, he warned that there would always be a danger of other countries mimicking the FAA's move, and further dampening tourist arrivals and eroding the P4.8 billion they are expected to spend in the Philippines this year.

BUSINESS

Pessimism over US plan sparks fall of Asia stocks

China bank writes down billions in US investments

HONG KONG—SHARES IN Bank of China (BOC) fell sharply Monday on reports it might post heavy profits or even a loss when announcing 2007 results in April, due to writedowns on struggling subprime investments.

The bank may announce a significant writedown on its $7.95 billion of investments in securities linked to US subprime mortgages, the South China Morning Post reported Monday, citing unnamed mainland banking sources.

Senior banking regulators have already warned the mainland leadership that BOC, as well as the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and China Construction Bank, would have to make provisions for all their subprime-linked assets, the report added.

BOC spokeswoman Wang Jingwen declined to comment on the report.

BOC, which has the biggest reported subprime exposure among Chinese banks, posted a 45.5 billion yuan ($6.3 billion) net profit for the first nine months of 2007, 46 percent more than a year before.

In September, China's second biggest bank said its portfolio of investments linked to the subprime market had been cut to $7.95 billion from $9.68 billion in August.

Last week BOC raised its offer for possible losses related to the assets.

However, subprime woes into such a frothier hit in the fourth quarter, having severely hurt top-25 banks to post record losses for the period.

Lee Wai-kee of Core Pacific-Yamaichi International said he expects the bank to announce a writedown but still increase its profit over 2006. AFP

A WOMAN picks up prospectuses for a new stock listing by Huaya International Holdings in Hong Kong. Hong Kong shares have been falling as investors' risk appetite soured about the US government's plan to avert a recession. —AFP

TOKYO—STOCK MARKETS ACROSS most of Asia fell Monday following declines on Wall Street last week amid investor pessimism over the US government's stimulus plan to prevent a recession.

A contraction in the American economy would likely hurt Asian exporters' profits, although rising trade and investment within the region has made Asia less dependent on the United States than in the past.

Investors sold off shares, appearing to be unimpressed by the economic stimulus plan US President George W. Bush announced Friday. The plan, which requires approval by Congress, calls for about US$146 billion worth of tax relief to encourage consumer spending.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index slid 3.6 percent in close at 13,320.98 points, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng index was down 3.5 percent in afternoon trading at 24,323.44.

China's Shanghai Composite index plunged 5.1 percent and India's market was down 2.7 percent. Markets in South Korea, Australia, Singapore, Taiwan and the Philippines also sank.

"People are certainly nervous about a potential recession in the US spilling over to the rest of the world," said Daniel Cohen of Asian Economic Forecasting in Action Economics in Singapore.

On Friday the Dow Jones industrial average slid 0.3 percent to 12,999.20, and some analysts warned that the US market is in for a period of protracted declines.

Investors also have dragged assurances from federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke that the US central bank is ready to act aggressively—which means a likely big interest rate cut later this month—to help support an economy pummeled by devastation in the housing and credit markets.

Fears about the US economy have dragged on most markets, many of which surged last year. Since the start of the year, Japan's benchmark index has declined 13 percent, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng index is down more than 11 percent.

Excluding Japan, 43 percent of Asian exports go to other nations in the region, Lehman Brothers calculates—up from 35 percent in 1995.

A drop of 1 percentage point in US economic growth would shave 3.3 percentage points from China's growth rate due to lower exports, Citigroup estimates. But China's economy will still likely expand 11 percent this year, the investment bank predicts.

Also, some strategists say Asian markets are now oversold and will rebound as investors snatch up stocks that have fallen to attractive levels. AP

Oil rises as Opec seen to keep output steady

SINGAPORE—OIL PRICES rose Monday in Asia amid expectations that Opec will resist pressure from the United States, the world's largest energy consumer, to raise crude production levels.

The Organization of Oil Exporting Countries should limit output in order to meet growing demand, its Energy Secretary General Shokrani told Saudi Arabia's oil ministry Saturday.

The Saudi Arabian oil minister, Ali Naimi, last week said that his country would raise production levels only when the market justifies it. The current inventory account normal, he added.

Light, sweet crude for February delivery added 30 cents to US$90.67 a barrel in Asian electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange by midmorning in Singapore. The contract rose 48 cents to settle at US$90.37 a barrel on Friday.

Bullard's visit to Saudi Arabia—which has the world's largest supply of oil—comes just before a Feb. 1 Opec meeting in which the oil cartel could announce increasing oil production.

"At this point, the market really does not expect an increase so just although there could still be a surprise," said Victor Shum, an energy analyst with Purvin & Gertz in Singapore.

Opec isn't likely to raise output "because the upcoming spring season is a period of weak demand," he said.

Bodman's comments were made less than a week after US President George W. Bush called the same tomorrow in Saudi Arabia. Bush said oil prices were very high and "tough on our economy."

Opec oil accounts for about 40 percent of the world's crude and Opec ministers often follow the lead of the Saudis when discussing whether to increase production.

Oil prices have retreated steadily US$10 from a record above US$100 a barrel earlier this month, weighed by concerns that a flagging US economy would dampen fuel demand. They rose Friday in the United States on hopes that President Bush's stimulus plan will work.

Soaring oil futures added 1.24 cents to US$2.1206 a gallon (3.8 liters) while gasoline prices added 1.17 cents to US$2.1151 a gallon. AP

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Regional Office I
San Juan, La Union

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

FOR THE PROCUREMENT OF TRUCKING/HAULING SERVICES IN THE DISPOSAL OF RICE ON LEASE OR LOAN BASIS OF IMPORTED RICE (NFA) FROM:
IMALLA UNION STADIUM WAREHOUSES TO RECEIVING WAREHOUSES
OF THE ACCREDITED PROVINCES IN REGION I – PO NO. II

LOT NO.	SOURCE (AREA)	DESTINATION (RECEIVING WAREHOUSE)	TRUCK RECEIPT	VOLUME (bags)	RATE/BAG (P)	AMOUNT (P)
	LA UNION					
1	Balaoan	Aloy (Bangued, ABRA)	1	7,10,000	23.000	1,463,000.00
2	San Juan	Bangued (Calanutian Annex, Bangued, Abra)	1	7,10,000	26.000	4,963,000.00
3	San Juan	Bangued (Calanutian Annex, Bangued, Abra)	1	7,10,000	26.000	4,963,000.00
4	Balaoan	Bulo Bulo (Lubog NFA Bldg., Lubog, Ilocos Sur)	1	50,000	30.000	1,500,000.00
5	Balaoan	Bulo Sur (Lubog NFA Bldg., Lubog, Ilocos Sur)	1	7,10,000	31.000	1,963,000.00
6	San Juan (SR)	Bulo Pangasinan (Pangasinan NFA Warehouse, Urdaneta City)	1	7,10,000	31.000	1,963,000.00
7	Bangar	Bulo Pangasinan (Pangasinan NFA Warehouse, Urdaneta City)	1	7,10,000	31.000	1,963,000.00
TOTAL			20	140,000		21,251,000.00
ADD: 3% VAT						6,375,300.00
APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT (ABC)						27,626,300.00

Rates as quoted

All truck units must be registered as "Trucks for Hire" (TH) with the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB). The prospective bidder must fall in any of all combinations upon payment of a non-refundable application fee of:

NO. OF TRUCKS	APPLICATION BIDDING FEE (PhP)
1 Truck units and below	10,000.00
More than 1 truck units	20,000.00

The issuance of bid documents, pre-bidding conference and bidding proper shall be conducted at NFA-Regional Office I Conference Room, San Juan, La Union on the following schedules:

	ACTIVITIES	DATE	TIME
1.	Issuance of Bidding Documents	January 23-25, 2008	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
2.	Pre-Bidding Conference	January 31, 2008	1:00 PM
3.	Deadline of Submission of Eligibility Requirements / Bidding Documents	February 14, 2008	1:00 PM

Eligibility criteria including, among others that the value of the prospective bidder's single largest contract for the last two (2) years, equivalent to current prices, completed within the period and similar to the contract to be bid, must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the Approved Budget for the Contract of the project to be bid.

Bidding shall be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using the non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria as specified in the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of R.A. 9184 otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act".

Prospective bidders must be registered with NFA to also apply for registration until January 31, 2008 at the Licensing Section of the NFA provincial offices where they intend to bid.

The NFA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, to waive any formalities or defects found therein or to accept such bids as it deems to be in the best interest of the government and the NFA, and/or to the Government or to declare the bidding a failure prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

(Sgd.) BETTY MARGARETE TAUS
District Regional Director and
BAC Chairman

MRL GOLD
PHILS., INC.

MRL GOLD APPOINTS OSCAR REYES CHAIRMAN

Manila, January 21, 2008 – MRL GOLD PHILS., INC. today announced the appointment of Mr. Oscar S. Reyes, B.A., as Chairman of the Company. The appointment follows the resignation of Mr. J. A. Clime from the position. Mr. Clime will continue to serve as Chief Executive Officer and President.

Following the appointment, Mr. Clime commented, "In the five years that Mr. Reyes has served as a director of the Company, his extraordinary experience and business acumen have played a significant role to MRL's growth and success in the Philippines. We are extremely pleased to now appoint him Chairman and look forward to his continued leadership and support."

Mr. Reyes is a distinguished and highly respected businessman with 42 years of business management experience in the Philippines and the United Kingdom. Mr. Reyes held a variety of executive positions with the Shell Group, including Chairman and Chief Executive of the Shell Companies in the Philippines. Mr. Reyes was President of Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corporation, a Managing Director of Shell Exploration B.V. which brought the large offshore Malampaya gas project into production in 2001, Area Finance Adviser for South America and Regional Planning Adviser for the Western Hemisphere and Africa Region of Shell International Petroleum Corporation.

As well as serving as a director of MRL's Canadian parent company Minoro Resources Ltd., Mr. Reyes presently holds directorships in a number of major Philippine companies including Sun Life of Canada Philippines, Inc. Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., Bank of the Philippine Islands, Manila Water Co., and Pepsi-Cola Product Phils. Inc. He was a United Nations National Ambassador for HIV-AIDS in the Philippines. Mr. Reyes is a member of a number of professional organizations including the Management Association of the Philippines, Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines, Canadian Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines and World Energy Council (Philippines) Inc.

Mr. Reyes has a Bachelor of Arts (Economics) degree from the Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines. He completed Master of Business Administration studies at the Ateneo Graduate School of Business Administration in the Philippines and the Harvard Business School Program for Management Development.

ABOUT MRL

MRL has been committed to socially and environmentally responsible exploration practices in the Philippines since 1997, designed to identify and develop economic mineral deposits that will provide lasting social and financial benefits to all MRL's stakeholders, including our employees, our partners, and the local communities in which we work. MRL is a subsidiary of Canadian-based Minoro Resources Ltd., a Tier 1 issuer trading on the TSX Venture Exchange (MRO) and the Frankfurt Stock Exchange (WKN 609167).

MRL is currently advancing its Agata nickel laterite project towards production and is carrying out a major resource delineation program on its Kay Tambo gold-silver project. The company has also identified 22 porphyry copper-gold prospects in the Philippines and has an aggressive strategy of joint venturing and drilling multiple targets in 2008.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Tony Clime, President, or Edwin Worsdell, Vice President
Address : 17/F Pearl of the Orient, 1218 Roxas Boulevard, Ermita, Manila
Phone : 525-66-66; 525-66-45
Email : edwin@mrlgold.com.ph; mrlgold@mrlgold.com.ph

LIFESTYLE

The good news about strength training

By Micah Pellaya
Lifestyle

PEOPLE OFTEN THINK strength training is difficult, demanding and less beneficial than cardio workout.

But strength training should not be missed or delayed since it is essential for well-balanced and better fitness results.

Others quit strength training because, when they become busy and abandon their program, they notice a change. As they say "I will never do weights again. Whenever I stop, my body becomes flabby."

Positive results

A lot of good things about strength training should encourage you to start incorporating it into your workout or inspire you to continue your existing program.

It has numerous benefits.

According to studies of exercisers doing regular strength training, effective fat loss can be achieved since increase in lean mass can improve one's metabolism by up to 15 percent. You can burn more calories during workouts and even while at rest.

Increase in strength also means more energy to perform other activities that will improve endurance, balance, coordination and flexibility.

Studies show that lifting weights at least twice a week can relieve health conditions like arthritis, heart problems, depression and diabetes. It also reduces falls among older people, improves mood and infuses better sleep.

It can be done anytime, anywhere.

You do not need any equipment to see, time or weight training so you can maintain your muscle mass. The American Council on Exercise considers body-weight workout as one of the top fitness trends for 2008.

Simple body-weight programs can be done at home, at work or while you travel. Exercise machine or equipment is not required to maintain your muscle mass, shape or strength, and exercise routines. Onsite are easy to execute, but can be challenging.

The type of training is applicable to all types of exercisers, especially women who just need moderate-weight training necessary. With a resilient program, you do not have to worry about increasing your strength program in the future and developing flabby arms and thighs.

The body-weight exercise program that I often ask my clients to do when they are busy or are traveling includes 15-25 repetitions of push-ups or knee-ups on knees for the chest, shoulders, triceps and core. Then 15-25 repetitions of half or full squats for hamstrings and thighs. Proper form, muscle contraction and breathing target core muscles throughout the exercise set.

You can do it for less than 20 minutes.

What if you can only spend 15 minutes on strength training in a week? It is not a rule to do it for at least 45 minutes. You can just target eight to 10 exercises for major muscle groups per exercise.

A study found that one set of each of the exercises had the same effect as doing multiple sets. Of course, if you do more sets, you burn more calories per exercise session.

Also part of fitness predictors trends for 2008 is a focused improvement. This can be a group class lasting less than 20 minutes that focus on one element of fitness or body part like a day each of core training, upper body strength, balance and agility and aerobics.

It can be cheap.

It is still recommended to ask a credible fitness professional regarding proper form, programming and exercise execution to avoid injuries and get results faster than just buying a magazine and doing the workout program on your own.

Fitness instructors in the free exercise classes are, if you feel that you need to pay for sessions until you are confident that you can do the exercise on your own, then pursue your plan. It is still a good health investment.

You do not want to injure your knees or lower back and spend more for rehabilitation.

It became a misconception that strength training was only for well-off individuals who needed to pay a trainer for every visit. You can do it for free provided you have enough knowledge and foundation to execute a program on your own after fitness training and consultations.

It can adjust to your needs.

Consider doing full body weight training by joining a group exercise class for fun and variety. It uses lighter weights either in the form of exercise balls, dumb bells or body bars. Ask the instructor to check your form and give you feedback after the class so you can work on areas that need improvement.

If you feel that strength training with or without equipment is not your type, then consider Pilates or yoga. These exercises will give you training benefits like core stability, strength improvement, toning, balance and flexibility.

The 2008 yoga study sponsored by the American Council on Exercise showed that subjects who performed Hatha Yoga three times a week improved their abdominal strength and endurance by doing 14 more curl-ups and six more push-ups after the eight-week study period.

E-mail the author at micahlpaik@gmail.com

Former Beauty Queen Suzette Arreglado didn't think as a woman that she would lose her hair. "By the time I was in my early 40's, the volume of my hair became about 1/3 of what it originally was," Suzette recalls. "I was more afraid my hairline would start to recede. I wanted to do something about it. A friend of mine recommended Svenson, and I must say I was really impressed with the results! Not only did my hair become thicker, but the condition of the hair improved. It was healthier, glossier and manageable. Svenson did wonders for me! I've recommended it to my relatives!"

To save your hair from falling out, try Svenson's **Hair Restoramax Ultra-Remedy**. Call now for a FREE consultation. Save your hair at Svenson!

WOMEN AT Svenson
Find Your Hairline Today
892-HAIR (4247)

A diary in comics by CARLO J. CAPARAS

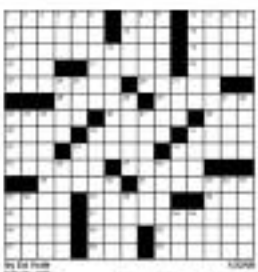
To have and to hold

Art: ARNELA. AVETRIA

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Computer file
6 Pipe tobacco
10 Gather more
14 Venezuelan seaside
15 1-Mile Limit
16 Mindful
17 Bush
18 Not allowed around
20 Pro's opposite
21 Yokel's exclamation
22 Monkey's pouting
23 Comes to rest
25 Implacable's way
28 Mendelssohn's oratorio
30 Move legal
31 Hunter of desert
32 Portion in pictures
34 Tapioca
36 Lacuna opposite
38 Architects' work
41 Astronomer's grp.
42 Rural crossroad
43 Gillette razor brand
44 Jerome Kern
45 Abducted
47 Pledge of fair play
49 Position with regard to
51 Nancy and Pelosi
53 Jazz singer Lionel
57 Mature animals
58 Letter Scrivens
60 Beard a barn
61 Lyric poem
62 Hairdresser's creation
63 Hangman's position
64 Flame holding
65 Cleveland's birthplace
66 Cornered
67 Ran up
68 Fix Route orders
69 Painful maltreatment

DOWN
1 Mel's and Rose's
2 Countries away
3 Submarine's foe
4 Off one's feet
5 Nathan Hale's partner
6 Made on
7 Indestructible part
8 Many pancakes
9 Bookstore sign
10 Popular anxiety medicine prior
11 Pedestrian
12 Wrestler and killer
13 Kick's unbecoming
19 Quaker pronoun
24 Lie up
26 Prairie house
27 Fuel for monsters
29 Gambling hand
33 Bookstore lines
35 Telekinetic
36 Kate is fourth with
37 Computer file
39 Lyric poem
40 Ancient Persian
41 European defense team
43 Rosary's fulfiller
44 Lotus dwarf
46 Wet and cold
48 Hackers
50 Longhorn
52 Saddle near Casablanca
53 Homicide
54 Member of sorority
55 Gun slightly
56 Actress Anderson
59 Not-for-profit org.



Saturday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

YOU WERE TODAY: You're full of bright, charged energy. To you, life is exciting, relaxed and stimulating. You're open and emotionally secure, confident in whatever happens around you. Because you have excellent interpersonal skills, many of your friends are like family members. Today's birthdays: Actor Lyle Lovett, 51; author Jonathan Franzen, 49; actor Jeremy Piven, 42.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Uranus, the planet of surprises, is moving forward and full of softness. People are more accessible and receptive to suggestions because they feel like they've had a good story with the facts.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Your love is magnetic. Your sensuality and passion are leading you to an exciting time. Be careful that you have the facts straight. Illusions, secrets and gullibility figures could have you, the person, mixed up. Have the courage to be yourself.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): The planet of beauty is moving forward today. You have the ability to see the beauty in situations, especially about relationships and finances.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): If you have the answers to help someone, you will. You also might see the importance of things to yourself in a new way. Be careful about becoming too emotional about money.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Although communications with partners and close friends are pleasant, there's no pleasant understanding. But it's not a good time to agree to important things. You don't have a clear picture of things. There's a misunderstanding.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): The Virgo Moon is in touch with your inner child. Be sure to stay close to your feelings. Misunderstandings and confusion may occur over the expression of affection. Be careful not to overreact to details. Balance with co-workers is important.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Your artistic talents are highlighted. You have better balance and more clear perspective. Be in touch with your inner feelings. Intuitions and inspirations.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Communications with family members are strained. Emotions are strong. Anger, jealousy and vindictiveness. You will particularly want to fight with those you love. Be careful that you don't say hurtful things you mean.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): The traffic that normally makes communication difficult is cleared up. Your ideas are clear. This is a good day to get your message across to others. Be careful that you don't misunderstand information.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Important messages come to you. Be careful that you don't misunderstand them because of your own emotions. Be sensitive to the feelings of others. Be careful that you don't misunderstand information.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Mutual dependency issues. Important or risky things with others are highlighted. This is a good time to get your message across to others. Be careful that you don't misunderstand information.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Your analytical abilities are at their peak. Be careful that you don't misunderstand information. Be careful that you don't misunderstand information.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis SudoKu By Dave Tiesse

5			4	7	3			2
		4				8		
	2			8			5	
4				5				9
7		1	6		8	2		5
6				9				1
	6			4			9	
		7				5		
8			5	1	6			4

Difficulty Level ★★

1/23

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answers to previous puzzle

2	4	5	1	8	3	6	7	9
3	7	9	2	6	4	5	1	8
1	8	6	9	5	7	3	4	2
5	9	2	4	1	8	7	8	3
6	1	7	5	3	8	2	9	4
4	3	8	7	2	9	1	6	5
7	6	2	3	9	5	4	2	1
9	2	4	3	7	1	8	5	6
8	5	1	6	4	2	9	3	7

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BROTHER and sister Camille and Mark Villar

NEWLYWED Sandy Poblador

FORMER Chief Justice Art. Panganiban and wife Lucy

SYDE Costa, Lol Ejercito, former President Joseph Estrada, Senate president Manny Villar, Speaker Jun de Venecia, (standing) Evelyn Fuentemilla, Emily Lopez, Gina de Venecia, Cynthia Villar and Silvestrin Lopez

The diamond man from Iloilo

GLENN Gois, former Jun Tuvilla-setting, and popular couple Mollie and Louie Abbate

POPULAR FORMER ILO-ilo representative and southern gentleman Albertino Lopez celebrated his 75th birthday—diamond (yes, dahling)—with 120 of his closest pals and relatives at the five-star Peters Albert Restaurant in Metropolitan Manila that was reserved exclusively for the occasion.

Hyatt Ambassador with Emily Rabadon A. took charge of all the arrangements from the food and wine to the string quartet that performed for the duo for sit-down dinner. Renowned floral architect and designer Barby Cenzo did the eye-catching table arrangements.

Our King for One Day Albertito, looking fit as a fiddle, and Emily, with their good-looking children—handsome Tito, Tinker's most stylish girl Debbie and Veronica, sultry beauty Melissa—were kept busy welcoming a seemingly endless line of guests, darlings.

It would be easier mentioning who were not there, pulangges. Hindot namedroppables and controversial personalities from politics, government and the diplomatic set. Business magnates and Manolo's ultra-scented came in full force.

InterCon executive chef Patrick Fournes and his culinary team came up with an absolutely exquisite menu: salad of roasted sea scallops, green asparagus grilled with lemon zest and garden herbs with truffle dressing and, for the main course, a choice between simmered Chilean sea bass in burgundy wine, white summer truffle on a bed of spinach leaves sauteed in garlic, or fillet mignon.

The dessert of marinated berries in rum with white cinnamon ice cream was served sugar free in the delight of the weight and health conscious (serious, dahlings).

It was such a fab party even one stayed till way way past Cinderella's bedtime. Really unusual since it's a known fact that Albertito seldom goes to bed later than 10 p.m.! Well, last year was not 75 years young every day, pulong ge, di baba?

OUR King for a Day, Albertito Lopez, with his beautiful family: Carlos, Melissa, Emily and Tito

CHITO Soliongco and Rica Tarrazo

LITE and Alexandra Kenneth

PBA and Phoenix Lopez with cousin Bonnie Lopez

GORGEOUS Charina Zaragoza

ARCHITECT Conrad Dugan

NATTY Top, Kaye and Karrie Tinga, Kathy Tuy, Kyle Tinga, Mayo Cabarios-Co, and Michael Hsiung

BUSINESSMAN Nonkin Co with sons Ronno and Ricci

DR. DANTE Morales, Mon and Joanne Olbarres, Lou Morales, Sonia Olbarres, and Mabel Morales

ALFREDO Rico, Rachy Manuel, Coni Quirino, Mitch Garcia, Charlie Mijares, and Joan Rosa (front) Pedro and Gina Rosa

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Henrrise Arcadio

Photos by Alice Sun Haagen
voting **Kodak** Easy Share
zoom

Jazz the way they like it

In a scintillating, awesome performance with the Philippine Trade Symphonic Band (PTSB), the star of a kind fab singer Miss Bayan stunned the familiar high-brow audience at the BCBC auditorium with her vocal dexterity and sheer power.

May gave a performance that knocked the socks off the Rabulls and Prada-shod ah-sho set, dahlings. She did the jazz numbers with panache and flair.

The PTSB proved up to the challenge, performing classical arrangements and jazz standards with refinement and wisdom well beyond the musicians' years.

Gorgeous emcee Vicky Morales asked the audience to please "be generous in aid of the PTSB's mission of ensuring a musical livelihood for each member of the band." The appeal resulted a Chambertin applause from the audience.

With the Music 100 members in attendance and the PTSB sponsors present, it was definitely an elegant evening of holiday jazz music from an unlikely partnership with surprisingly glamorous results, pulongges.

And who says there is support this truly worthy cause? Well, dahlings, it is easier to report on who were not there. But one thing for sure, whoever you love or don't love was there, pulongges.

Remember let there be livelihood in music. Please support the Young Musicians Development Organization (YMDO), dahlings. With your help, we can sustain the musical gifts of young talents "so they may pursue an artful living."

Flavors of Spain

The grand launch of the popular Pompo Hotels' Flavors of Spain at the gorgeous venue of The Loft in Mandaluyong Rockwell was definitely a smashing success! Our town's international set arrived with the ole-ole oriental and were welcomed by el simpatico Spanish ambassador Luis Arias and economic counsellor Javier Alvarez, together with Pompo's hotshot management team, pulongges.

Spanish wines flowed all night courtesy of Exeter Deli, scrumptious the excellent gastronomic delights like paella, jamon Serrano, manchego and churros con chocolate. Oh more ole-ole to you! It's a perfect excuse for the flamenco by Clare Ramoso, no less.

When it was time for the raffle, everyone was in full attention. After all, check out these giveaways, pulongges: weekend getaways at the exclusive Club Pan to Paigo in Batangas, Bed Vista Hotel in Tagaytay City and Pearl Farm Beach Resort in Samal City, divers' watches from Seiko, golf packs from Inner Infinity and inflatables from Clean Rainmen.

Grand prize was a round-trip ticket to exciting Barcelona and studded cuisine of one of the best and finest ways to get to Europe, $1,100, no less!

Well, the event did not end there. The Flavors of Spain celebration were on its all Pompo, managed properties by two-months. Not bad, huh? Not bad at all, dahlings.

More info? Do call 7324 999 or e-mail glenda@pompohotels.com and visit www.flavorsofspain.com.

EDUCATION. The caption for this photo that appeared in last Friday's column should have read: Tina Hernandez Cacho-Olivares with daughter Rocio and her Scottish boyfriend Hamish. We regret the error, pulongges.

Workshop aims to help boost vitality

A VITAL SWITCH WORKSHOP will be conducted Feb. 2, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., at Rockwell. Teresa all over the world, the workshop covers a range of tools that boost vitality, improve creativity, enhance communication skills, reduce stress and prevent burnout.

Headed by Samantha Starr, a managing director, Vital Switch aims to teach stress-relief and performance-enhancement techniques. The quick and easy techniques are designed to help people improve their energy levels and mental clarity on the job or at home.

Starr is author of the book "Conquering Chronic Fatigue: Mastering Your Own Life Force as a Means to Recover from Ongoing Burnout and Tiredness."

Available in mid-March and published by the United States-based Pilotmatch.com, the book is based on Starr's own experience of burning out resulting in the Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

Miss Starr and Jiaring the workshop is for fun foolishness), director of workshops and IT. Currently running the German, Swiss and Austrian versions of Vital Switch, he gets people to break through the limits of their lives and to regain their original vitality.

Workshop participants should bring a mat and comfortable clothes. RSVP 9902805 or 9903-9652033, www.vitalswitch.com).

Post-game collection

ACCEL IS SET TO UNVEIL comfortable and fashionable clothes to wear after a physically demanding activity.

A variety of short shorts, bottoms, dresses and collared shirts will be launched through the Accel Lifestyle collection by Sportswear Philippines Inc.

Made from water resistant fabric, the Accel Lifestyle line is perfect for off-court activities. Seven innovative designs for men will be the first to be launched.

Sportswear president Willie Ortiz said with their unique designs, the outfits are ideal after a game or workout.

ACTIVITY Icon Mandy Ortiz wears Accel's Pique Color Set Polo design.

Two-day art therapy

THE PARALAC 3009 HOMES, a Filipinotown health resort in Lipa, Batangas, is offering a two-day art therapy experience for P8,250.

Art therapy expert Nora Isaac from the United Kingdom will facilitate the workshop that aims to teach effective means of preventing illness by relieving stress and increasing emotional and spiritual satisfaction and strength.

The workshop will focus on working with fears, ADHD and hurts-out, using clay, oil, soft pastel and watercolor.

Proper breathing techniques is incorporated in the session as well as relaxation of facial jaw muscles through visualization or abdominal breathing and muscles through clay modelling.

Two-day course fee is P5,500 per person; P5,000 for one-day course. Limited slots for one-on-one sessions with Annie on Tuesday-Friday. Contact her at 0917 P2,500 (8844807), e-mail ant@ihe.com.ph and reservations@thehomes.com.ph).

INSIDE OUT
Cory Quirino

How sweet can you get?

THIS IS THE AGE OF CONvenience, one that offers hyperstudded an easy way a faster way, a more time-efficient manner of living.

And one major component of it is fast food.

Easy food

Fast, as against slow, as quick food is marketed to those the time demands of people in a hurry. Enzymes that would otherwise be preserved if food is prepared in low heat, are killed due to high cooking temperatures.

As a result, when a person relies mainly on processed, overcooked food, a low in vitamins and minerals his her regular regimen. Over a period of time, a high fat, high sugar diet will result in obesity and high blood sugar levels.

Sugar = wrinkles

Sugar is vital to cell life and health but sugar in the body that is called glucose can become poison to the cells.

A person's skin condition is affected by sugar, which attaches to the proteins of collagen. This results to stiffness and inflexibility leading to wrinkles. In to protect the skin, the intake of sugar has to be reduced.

To do

1. Replace white bread with high-fiber wheat or multi-grain bread.

2. Remove all potato chips to your cupboard. However, if you have the habit of munching on chips, choose the high-fiber variety. Also, do not eat chips on an empty stomach. This will send your sugar levels soaring. Instead, eat them only after you have had a snack or a meal.

3. Snack on items that are nutritious...nuts and fruits.

4. If you have a supply of carbonated drinks, have an equal supply of fresh juices and soy milk.

5. Add a new supplement to your daily menu...the antioxidant alpha-lipoic acid. It helps to keep vitamin C, E and glutathione longer inside the body thus providing the skin cells more protection.

If you also want to diminish the effects, especially the liver, cataract metabolism, a whitening pill if taken twice a day but is a dorcas pill. It labels only once daily (available in Mercury & Mercury Drug).

Alpha-lipoic acid has more staying power than other antioxidants, adding that in your supplement but is a wise choice. More than a health pill, it can also make your skin look younger.

6. Eat fish and more fish. It is best and wherever he is overtime is omega 3. If you learn to eat more fish each day, you will find yourself losing weight gradually.

7. Reduce the carbohydrate diet. They add up to your sugar intake so go easy. Take a cup of empty tea after meal time, especially after eating dessert.

Fatigue-buster

Did you know that maintaining a low insulin level guarantees you an energetic body? It also is a great fatigue-fighter.

Weight or no weight, exercising three times a week—will suffer from high low sugar levels wreaking havoc on the body.

Keep your sugar level steady. If you are hungry, eat. But eat slowly.

You will find that your ability to concentrate will also improve. And you get a lasting...high levels of nutrients in your brain that will give you a sense of well being.

Sweet nothings

Sweet nothings are made up of sweet things you do for yourself when you feel you are about to be in a bad or depressed mood.

Try to:

1. Keep your cool. Being in a sweet mood guarantees good health. Losing your temper will cause problem your breathing and make your heart race.

2. Keep a little love in your heart. It will make you smile not only at others but also at yourself.

Affirm: "My life is as sweet as my expectations."

Love and light!

References: "The Wrinkle Cure" by Dr. Nicholas Perricone

INNER AWARENESS
Jaime Licauco

Like an Indonesian ritual

Part III

JIMMY WAS ONLY SUPposed to take pictures, but right at that time I was feeling Sinead in the room. Jimmy started making noises through his throat, I think? He just dropped his camera and lay back on the chair," Celia recalled.

That since my eyes were closed, I did not know what was happening to him because he was getting affected by what was happening. All I knew was that everything would be okay. Although I was aware, because I could hear Jimmy, I was too relaxed in my state and was being told it was okay.

"Everything was recorded in the video. Jimmy's hands also started moving in a very smooth way, not like him. The energy can lead anyone present in the room.

"When an experience! My lower back pain was so relieved. [My] still back was gone. After the session, I could still feel the high. My body was still moving in that same motion.

"Once it is opened...it will always be there. And so now, I am able to do this inner dance on my own. It feels so good! It is a form of meditation that keeps you very focused."

Ritual

When I first heard of this inner dance and after talking to Pt Villanueva about it, the process reminded me of the so-called Javanese, an Indonesian ritual that was not a ritual.

I first came across this process in the early '80s. Leather is the main ritual or process of an Indonesian esoteric practice called Subud (if I recall the name correctly).

During latihan, participants, who may be complete strangers to one another, go inside a room. They are not told what to do or what to expect. There is no leader to lead the group or explain what will happen.

For a few minutes they wait to wonder what the whole thing is all about. After a while they experience some sensations at the whole thing. Still, nobody talks or gives any hint of what is going on.

Somehow the energy in the room changes and one by one the participants in the room move or sway or drop to the floor. Others begin to roll all over the floor but nobody bumps into each other. Every once, everybody is moving in whichever way the energy moves him.

After the latihan, everybody feels very good. This is similar to what happens during the inner dance. It is not an overt lead as activities one or few persons and the rest begin to follow so their own with their eyes closed.

The second time I experienced the inner dance was with our small spiritual discussion group called the Ateopagus, which meets once a month. I invited the members last year to meet #1 and he introduced to the inner dance.

Surprisingly, a great majority of them attended although I hardly told them anything about it except that this process was a very powerful experience that Celia and I had experienced.

If I recall, there were about 13 or 14 of us who attended that special morning. Since they are publicity shy and very private individuals, I cannot reveal their identities.

Remarkable & special

Almost everybody in the group experienced some being remarkable and special during that inner dance session with #1. He started by making Celia dance until everybody started moving on their own, propelled by an inner energy stirred in their bodies.

At this time, something happened to me that I had not experienced before. I went into a trance and fell from my chair to the floor. Then I went into a journey back in time from my present adult life to childhood and then birth. I saw myself inside the womb of my mother. I crouched and assumed a fetal position for a few minutes, then I went forward in time again until I reached my present age. I went back in time and relived it.

It was an inner dance—an inner rebirth. It was a very powerful experience for me until I found myself teary-eyed. It was a cathartic experience I could not forget.

Each one experiences the inner dance in his or her unique way. And each experience is not necessarily the same. About two members of our group said they felt nothing special. Maybe the place had something to do with it, maybe the group had something to do with it and maybe even the phases of the moon had something to do with those different experiences.

I wanted to find out more about it...

MEDICard, The Healthcare I Deserve!
What are the treatment methods for Goiter?
Take Charge Doc!
Nicolas

ENTERTAINMENT

Julie Rosete Q. Velarde
Web feedback: inquirer.net/entertainment/showbiz to DOU (Dance) and DOU (Dance) or email us at entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

Holiday for Certified Piolo Addicts

FOR THE CERTIFIED PIOLO ADDICTS, PO's birthday is a self-declared holiday. They fly from different parts of the world just to celebrate with their idol.

Last Jan. 11, the CPAs' party for 10 was held at Montgomery Place Clubhouse. He arrived with **Mark Bautista**, **Herb**, **Joyce Bernal**, **Erich Rauterondo** and **Brad Murdoch**. All of Piolo's siblings were present, too. Like a kid, the birthday boy wanted to light his cake himself.

He was having an instead of feasting on the lechon, Al just savored its yummy aroma. Not to mention the sweet smell of assets from his adoring fans. Ahhh! The incredible heaven of being Piolo Pascual.

Candles

After months of send-use on TV and print, Pops Fernandez and Martin Nievera finally had a heart-to-heart talk. "We discussed our two-month-old son Ian," said Pops.

She was shocked, though, that while they were talking, it was already in the news. Pops isn't minding Martin's 25th anniversary concert because she'll be out of town.

"I really don't wanna make a big fuss about it," she said. Over and beyond being the Crown King and Queen, they are parents trying to get along well for the sake of Xiam and Robin.

On guard

Could it be true that **Rosanne Gainza** is over-the-top happy about her character dying in "Palos?" That means she'll be out of the series and her **JP Jake Cuenca** will be paired off with **Bangs Garcia**.

There have been so many stories about her jealousy streaks and drunken outbursts but she has decided those all to spend show biz flashes. Just as her rest in our gaze, "It's over now that I'm feeling down, I'm excited about my new soap with **Claudine Barretto**."

Working with Claud may be a thrill for Rosanne but it's not the same as being with Jake on the set as role-cue guard him like a hawk.

Focal attraction?

Gone who this aging married chanteuse is that's because obsessed with a married award-winning actor is the point of being like his mother already. As someone privy to her affairs revealed "Nakakahiya siya sa mga ng anon. Kawawa yung comedian in the cast ang di-maddrive siya. Daddies lang si Jacko" how close is the singer to doing a **Ellene Cuna** to "Head Attraction?"

Berlin blast

Director **son pawel Quark Henares** is having a blast in Berlin. His shots tweets "Relax" is the opening film at The Asian Shadows Festival. I remember how **Quentin Tarantino** was swooning about Quark's movie when we joined him for dinner during his visit here last year.

"You said say it as more when the movie's going too since the lead character is in true, everything is reversible," says Tarantino. I'm sure that after the Germans watch "Relax," they will exclaim "Wunderbar!" in unison.

Fit and fab

If you're 35-55, join Del Monte's "Fit 'n' Right" campaign at SM North's Edsa on Jan. 30.

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

BEFORE make a wish! Birthday boy kisses out the candles on his cake.

POWER PLANT CINEMA
THE HEARTBREAK KID PG13
NATIONAL TREASURE 2 G
27 DRESSES PG13
SWEENEY TODD R18
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS G
I AM LEGEND PG13
MOVIES SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

From a reasonable film group, Breaking the Box Productions, comes a new independent digital film. Any follower, writer and producer, wants a piece of young filmmakers in CONDO!
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Give Your Looks an Upgrade

Facial Care Centre FOR MEN offers *5 Ways* to rid your skin of its flaws

1 Acne scars and Blemishes

Sure, celebs dig the Colin Farrell scruffy look, but acne scars and blemishes do not equal ruggedly handsome. Pitching pimples and up in scars and blemishes – which last longer than the actual zits! Before someone calls you Crater Face, try the **Diamond Peel**. It's a highly advanced procedure that'll painlessly remove old dead surface skin. It gets rid of post-acne scars, blemishes and other dark spots.

2 Pimple breakouts and Back Acne

You've already been through hell in high school. Unless you managed to skip the awkward stage), dunes on your face subtracts pogi points, while acne on your back ruins your sex appeal. So leave acne to past (unpleasant) memories. **LightCure Acne Therapy** is an easy, effective way to get rid of the acne – fast. It uses a high-intensity blue-violet light to kill acne bacteria. Amazingly, it treats zits on any part of the body 3x faster than other procedures.

3 Fine lines and Wrinkles

Lousy pick-up lines and fine facial lines neither will get you the girl. And don't go denying your age, because the wrinkles are a giveaway. **Advanced Lasertone** is a non-surgical reactive treatment that will get rid of mental fine lines and wrinkles – without the need for stitches, cuts or injections! Your skin will look years younger. Revealing your age is up to you.

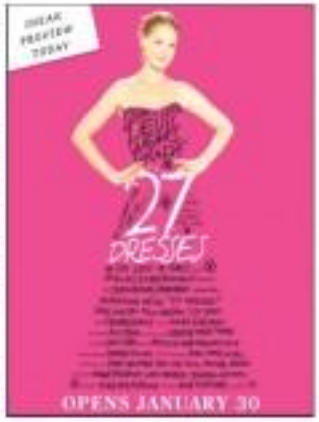
4 Loose, sagging skin

Everything is faster these days. Want to look years younger in less than an hour? **ReFirme** is a skin-tightening treatment with no needles, stitches, scars or sedation involved. After a quick 45-minute session, sags are lifted. Lines are diminished and skin is firmer.

5 Skin Fatigue

Stressed? Who isn't, these days? Relax and get pampered with **Shi-Zen D-Tox**. The combination of Shiatsu massage with a detoxification facial mask will surely send you to a state of nirvana. It improves the texture of your skin and corrects skin fatigue dysfunctions.

All treatments are available at the FOR MEN Centre. Call 813-7958 for a free consultation.



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JANUARY 30

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GALLERIA

1 SWEENEY TODD • THE	6 I COULD NEVER BE YOUR WOMAN
2 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS	7 I AM LEGEND
3 27 DRESSES Sneak Preview	8 IndieSine: SIKIL
4 DESPERADAS	9 THE HEARTBREAK KID
5 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	10 DRAGON WAR

ERMITA

1 DRAGON WAR	6 I AM LEGEND
2 BEE MOVIE / 27 DRESSES Sneak Preview	7 I COULD NEVER BE YOUR WOMAN
3 DESPERADAS	1 THE HEARTBREAK KID
4 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO	2 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
5 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	2 SWEENEY TODD

METRO EAST

1 SWEENEY TODD	6 I AM LEGEND
2 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS	6 THE HEARTBREAK KID
3 DRAGON WAR	7 NATIONAL TREASURE 2
4 27 DRESSES Sneak Preview	8 DESPERADAS

NOVALICHES

1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	5 DRAGON WAR
2 THE HEARTBREAK KID	6 I AM LEGEND
3 27 DRESSES Sneak Preview	7 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
4 DESPERADAS	8 SWEENEY TODD

PIONEER

1 SWEENEY TODD	3 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
2 NATIONAL TREASURE 2HEARTBREAK KID	4 DRAGON WAR

STA. ROSA / LIPA

STA. ROSA	LIPA
1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2
2 SWEENEY TODD	2 I AM LEGEND
3 I AM LEGEND	3 DESPERADAS
4 DESPERADAS	4 KATAS ng SAUDI
5 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO	5 DEATH PROOF

DASMARINAS / IMUS

DASMARINAS	IMUS
1 27 DRESSES Sneak Preview	1 THE HEARTBREAK KID
2 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	2 I AM LEGEND
3 I AM LEGEND	3 27 DRESSES Sneak Preview
4 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS	4 NATIONAL TREASURE 2
5 SWEENEY TODD	5 SWEENEY TODD
	6 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS

ANGELES / TARLAC

ANGELES	TARLAC
1 SWEENEY TODD	1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2
2 DESPERADAS	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS	3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
4 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	

STARMILLS

1 SWEENEY TODD	5 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
2 DESPERADAS	5 NATIONAL TREASURE 2
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	9 I AM LEGEND

BACOLOD / ILOILO

BACOLOD	ILOILO
1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2
2 I AM LEGEND	2 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
3 BEE MOVIE / ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE	3 DEATH PROOF
4 DESPERADAS	4 I AM LEGEND
5 AMAR ng KAMAKAILAN	5 DESPERADAS
6 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	6 TINAWA / 3 DAYS of DARKNESS

a film by Ronaldo Arrastia

Three friends, two women...a lasting friendship...
A Bizarre Love Triangle

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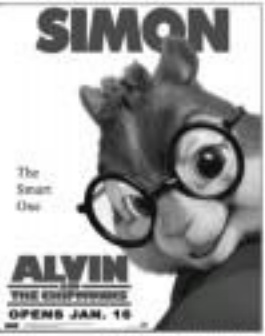

PJ was having an party night, he couldn't get a solid PJ interview.

Holiday for Certified Piolo Addicts

From page D1

and 27 and SM Cebu and SM Dasma on Feb. 2 and 3. Yen Bautista will be part of ABS-CBN's "Got 2B Fit Challenge" TV show. Kim Made management, contract and PIOLOO are at stake for two grand winners. For details, call 6834555 or pm@ for fit-ful and fantastic!

Na sorp pic

Mikaela Quinsaloso is still hesitant to accept offers for her to pose sexy on the cover of men's magazines. "I'm sorry but people might think na I'm game with just because binalap na ako," she said. Even in the romance department, Mikaela is not yet ready to go all out. "I guess no dates for me or an exclusive 'break pa'." The beauty queen hasn't met the Prince Charming who could let her be dethroned (wink) heart.

E-mail: anotherpiolofanatic@yahoo.com

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MMTA MOVIE GUIDE

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AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	1 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	2 I AM LEGEND	3 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS	4 27 DRESSES
GLORIETTA 4	1 27 DRESSES	2 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	3 SWEENEY TODD	
	4 D-WAR	5 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS	6 THE HEARTBREAK KID	7 THE HEARTBREAK KID
GREENBELT 1	1 SWEENEY TODD	2 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS		
GREENBELT 2	1 27 DRESSES	2 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS		
	3 SWEENEY TODD	4 THE HEARTBREAK KID	5 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	2 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS		
	3 27 DRESSES	4 SWEENEY TODD	5 THE HEARTBREAK KID	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 THE HEARTBREAK KID	2 SWEENEY TODD	3 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	4 I AM LEGEND
MARKET! MARKET!	1 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS	2 THE HEARTBREAK KID		
	3 SWEENEY TODD	4 27 DRESSES	5 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	
TRINOMA	1 I COULD NEVER BE YOUR WOMAN	2 THE HEARTBREAK KID	3 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	4 SWEENEY TODD
	5 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS	6 D-WAR	7 27 DRESSES	

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta — Promenade Manila — January 18 to February 6

Greenbelt — WELCOME 2008 SALE — January 11 to February 3

Alabang Town Center — Alvin & The Chipmunks Live at Alabang Town Center — January 26 & 27, 11am, 2pm & 4pm, Activity Center

Ayala Center Cebu — WELCOME 2008 SALE — January 11 to February 3

Market! Market! — WELCOME 2008 SALE — January 11 to February 3

Cristafer's — Rosemary Philippines presents Fabulosa na Fin de Milenio! — January 11 to 27, 2008 — For inquiries, pls. call 887-2110 or visit www.rosemaryphilippines.com

Ayala Museum — Masters of Philippine Art — Paintings by Juan Luna, Fernando Amorsolo, and Fernando Zobel — For more info, pls. call 757-7117 ex. 111 or visit ayalamuseum_inquiry@yahoo.com.ph

Tri Noma — WELCOME 2008 SALE — January 11 to February 3

SPECIAL PREVIEW
SNEAK
KATHERINE HEIGL
27 DRESSES
JANUARY 21 (Mon.) & 22 (Tue.)
GLORIETTA 4 • GLORIETTA 1
GREENBELT 2 • ALABANG TOWN CENTER
MARKET! MARKET! • TRINOMA

glorietta GREENBELT

Importance of screenwriters underscored

FOR MOST OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL lives, many American screenwriters labor in solitude, unrecognized until at most a few films of their own; millions of dollars per screenplay, but the public doesn't know much about them.

All viewers know is that it sometimes takes more than 10 writers to make a TV talk show host's opening night stand-up, ah, so funny. And that some movies go through four or five months introducing ever-new nuances of witless, so that a Mac's swirling credit-sometimes look like a list of the residents of a small condominium.

Scrooge & Grinch

WELL, all that has changed, now that the US Writers' Guild strike is in its 6th month. Writers continue to picket studios, asking for a more equitable share of the spoils; and studios, cannot profit pic, but producers persist in playing a miserly combination of Scrooge and Grinch.

Initially, industry people thought the strike wouldn't last so long—but, now that it has, it isn't only the jobless TV film writers who are suffering. Our entire show biz industry is!

Quite a number of TV shows have gone in to reruns or have been put temporarily in the freezer, because they have simply run out of scripts to shoot. As a result, TV anchors' salaries have similarly been put on hold, to their acute dismay.

Golden casualty

THE GREE situation took a turn for the worse when the recent Golden Globe awards was radically pared down to just an announcement of the winners. If the strike lasts into February, the Oscars could similarly be affected.

What, no glitz and glamour at the Academy Awards? No grand promenades down that ironic red carpet, in full view of millions of television viewers?

A pared down Oscars awards event would be like seeing Cher in a dress. Pale. Often shocking into a mood, and Oprah looking like Harpo Marx—no fun at all!

Well, that just serves as a timely reminder of the great importance of scriptwriters in showbiz. They provide the memorable stories, in some drama, really funny jokes and riveting themes and insights that make the entertainment world go round—and don't you forget it!

Now that the entire US TV-film industry is limping, that timely reminder will definitely be taken to heart. But, will the indomitable moguls and pint-force producers to go from Scrooge to Santa...or, will the Grinch continue to refuse to budge an inch?

For everyone's sake, we hope that the featherbrained finally gets involved before the Oscars become dropped from

Neylan U. Torre

Worse is RP

THE SITUATION is even worse in the Philippines, where most scriptwriters don't get to enjoy any slice of any pie at all. They generally get paid a pittance; their stories and scripts are butchered beyond recognition, and writers aren't even mentioned in publicity campaigns to promote the productions they've written.

Efforts are consistently made to address these inefficiencies and indignities, but they haven't had much positive effect. We hope, therefore, that the current US Writers' Guild strike that threatens to daring the American entertainment industry to its knees will also give TV-film producers here food for thought—and impetus for corrective action.

Writers are important—there are no two ways about it. And it shouldn't take a crippling strike to ground that disagreed of truth into everybody's collective wooden noggin.

Britney's friends fear for her sanity

LOS ANGELES—SHE IS WRECKED round the clock by photographers, chased at high speed, and friends fear for her mental stability.

After a year of erratic behavior in the glare of the press spotlight that she both shuns and invites, pop star Britney Spears has some observers comparing the celebrity media frenzy surrounding her with what British tabloids in Diana faced and some voice concern about her safety.

Last straw

Spears, 26, has been sucked out 24 hours a day for the past two years. This week, she was involved in a late-night car chase, in which her paparazzi were arrested for reckless driving, and she shocked back into her car after being mobbed by media covering a child custody court hearing.

When photographers followed her into an LA church on Monday, it was the last straw for talk-show host Susie O'Donnell.

"I saw it there, and I ran over it into the one road," O'Donnell wrote in her blog. "She (Spears) will be trying to get away, but they will chase her car as they chased her into that church."

Reuters